

James P. Hanratty

Office Managing Attorney

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Jim is the managing attorney and Casualty Supervisor for the Jacksonville office. In this capacity, Jim oversees a team of experienced attorneys handling corporate, commercial and civil litigation matters including workers' compensation across Northern Florida.

Jim transferred to the Jacksonville office in 2012 after a 23-year career defending manufacturers, hospitals, trucking and transportation carriers, retail establishments and construction professionals throughout Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Jim is an experienced first-chair trial lawyer and has taken over 150 civil jury trials to verdict since 1989.

In Florida, Jim has put his broad based experience to work by assuming the statewide supervision of matters for key clients in a wide range of cases including products liability, trucking and transportation, commercial premises liability and construction related injuries. Jim continues to handle significant and catastrophic injury cases involving automobile and general liability claims with an emphasis on the defense of brain injury claims. He is also experienced in representing health care professionals in medical malpractice claims. Jim has also expanded his practice to include representing condominium and homeowners associations as well as representing employers in matters involving ADA, FLSA/Wage & Hour, and Title VII before the EEOC and the Florida Commission on Human Relations.

Jim maintains a Martindale-Hubbell rating of AV® Preeminent™, the highest rating for professional competence and was recognized in 2010 as a Super Lawyer. He is board certified in Civil Trial Law by The Florida Bar. Jim is licensed to practice in all state and federal District Courts of Florida.

Education

- University of Akron School of Law (J.D., 1989)

Practices

- Construction Injury Litigation
- Medical Malpractice
- Automobile Liability
- Premises & Retail Liability
- General Liability
- Lawyers' Professional Liability
- Catastrophic Claims Litigation

- Walsh University (B.A., 1986)

Admissions

- Florida, 2012
- U.S. District Court Middle District of Florida
- U.S. District Court Northern District of Florida
- U.S. District Court Southern District of Florida

Honors & Awards

- AV® Preeminent™ by Martindale-Hubbell®
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants (2021-2027)
- Florida Trend's Legal Elite - Civil Trial (2022)
- Ohio Super Lawyer (2010)

Associations & Memberships

- International Association of Defense Counsel
- American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA)
- American Bar Association
- Florida Bar Association
- Jacksonville Bar Association
- Ohio Academy of Trial Lawyers, 1989-1993
- Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys (Chair, Insurance Relations Committee, 2002-2007; Chair, Trial Tactics Committee, 2009-2012)
- Ohio State Bar Association
- Stark County Ohio Bar Association
- West Virginia Bar Association

Classes/Seminars Taught

- *Top 5 Challenges Relative to Workers' Compensation Claims, Property and Casualty Claims and For Mediators*, FCCI Educational Conference, October 2018
- *Defending Catastrophic Injury Claims - How to Stack the Deck in Your Favor*, Marshall Dennehey Florida Claims Symposium – Casino Royale, Tampa, FL, September 20, 2018
- *"Courtroom Warriors" Present: Trying Your Case To A Defense Verdict; "Opening Statements; Making A Good First Impression,"* Cleveland Association of Civil Trial Attorneys, August 2008
- *Use, Selection of Expert Witnesses*, Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys, 2003
- *Insurance Relations Round Table*, Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys, 2003
- *Defense of Wrongful Death Case*, Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys, 2002
- *Law Office Management*, University of Akron, 1992, 1995
- *Insurance Seminar*, Ohio Academy of Trial Lawyers, 1992

Published Works

- "Reducing Workplace Accident Liability," *Wholesale & Distribution International*, Winter 2014
- "Benefits of Involving Counsel When an Accident Occurs," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 19,

No. 2, June 2013

- "A Defendant's Guide To Approaching Head Injury Cases," *Law360.com*, February 8, 2013
- "Benefits of Involving Counsel When an Accident Occurs," *Construction Executive*, December 2012
- "Avoiding Headaches in Traumatic Brain Injury Cases," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 18, No. 4, December 2012
- "Opening Statements: You Never Have a Second Chance to Make a First Impression," *OACTA Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2, Issue 4, Winter, 2009-2010
- "A Momentary Lapse Of Reason In Ohio," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 14, No. 3, September 2008
- "Selection, Use, Care and Feeding of Expert Witnesses," *OACTA Review*, Winter 2002
- "Discovery In a Slip/Trip and Fall Case," *OACTA Quarterly Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Spring, 1998

Media Commentary

- "Delivery Driver Crime: The Restaurant Industry Problem Nobody Talks About," *QSRweb* and *Pizza Marketplace*, September 7, 2018

Military Service

- United States Army Reserve, 1981-1990

Significant Representative Matters

- Obtained summary judgment in a wrongful death and negligent security action involving the off premises murder of an employee. The plaintiff's decedent was abducted, stabbed, and strangled during her lunch break after leaving the workplace parking lot with a man who had been looking for one of her co workers. We demonstrated that the crime was not foreseeable and that the client owed no duty. The First District Court of Appeal affirmed the order granting summary judgment.
- A defense jury verdict in a tort/underinsured motorist suit directly against an insurance carrier where the plaintiff claimed brain injury and demanded \$1.25 million.
- Resolution of a wrongful death action against a manufacturer of a forklift by establishing that the incident was not caused by a defect in the product.
- Resolution of a claim during trial of a dentist who, as a result of an auto accident, was left with neurological damage to her right arm. Economic experts claimed her professional loss due to the inability to practice dentistry was in excess of \$3.4 million, but the case was settled during trial for approximately 24% of that number, due in large part to the cross examination of plaintiff's expert revealing several inconsistencies.
- Supervised and coordinated several protective investigations for national construction firm requiring immediate response and scene inspection within hours of incidents to preserve the evidence and coordinate defenses often leading to the prevention of claims.
- Successfully coordinated investigation and defense of Japanese manufacturer of industrial machinery in an amputation case leading to dismissal of client before trial.
- Successfully defended National Restaurant Chain in multi-party litigation involving catastrophic injuries by using social media discovery to defeat emotional distress claims due to scarring.

- Successfully defended a watercraft manufacturer at jury trial in a product liability action involving allegations of brain injury.
- Obtained a defense jury verdict in a premises case on behalf of a national tax firm arising from a fall with serious injuries including a fractured femur with placement of intramedullary rod.
- Obtained a defense jury verdict in a product defect/Magnuson-Moss action alleging personal injury due to inhalation of toxic mold and chemicals.
- Successfully defended recreational vehicle retailer in multiple claims arising from allegations of product defect and "downstream distributor" claims including successful use of dispositive motions.
- Successfully defended automobile accident case at jury trial involving catastrophic injuries and liability questions involving complex accident reconstruction issues and vehicle dynamics.
- Successfully defended regional construction firm at jury trial in claim involving allegations of complex medical conditions arising from a low speed impact accident.

Certifications

- Board Certified Specialist, Civil Trial Law, The Florida Bar

Results

Summary Judgment Secured in a Contentious Coverage Matter

We were granted summary judgment in a coverage matter. The plaintiff was seeking UM benefits for a policy he had on a car he owned for an accident that occurred when he was operating a motorcycle he owned, but did not insure. The court confirmed that the policy excluded underinsured motorist coverage for the plaintiff's motorcycle. The issue was that the definition of "motor vehicle" for the other owned motor vehicle exclusion was not specifically provided in the policy. In the PIP coverage, the policy contained an exclusion for motorcycles because the definition said motor vehicles must have four wheels. The plaintiff argued that the same policy said a motorcycle was not a motor vehicle for PIP coverage, but was a motor vehicle for the other owned vehicle exclusion. This was an ambiguity in the policy that should be interpreted against the carrier. The plaintiff had significant injuries that far exceeded the value of the policy. The court upheld both exclusions and followed our argument that the PIP and UM portions of the policy are separate and distinct and that any definition in the PIP coverage did not necessarily apply to the UM coverage.

Directed Verdict Secured in a High-Exposure Defamation Lawsuit in Florida

We obtained a directed verdict in favor of our client in a high-risk defamation lawsuit. We were called to try the case on behalf of the CEO of a local chapter of a well-known national nonprofit after the plaintiff was permitted to amend the complaint to seek punitive damages from the CEO personally. The plaintiff was a volunteer at a camp. A decision was made to separate him from the camp and the organization. The plaintiff alleged that the CEO personally defamed him by alerting other volunteers and committees of the decision. He demanded an eight-figure sum prior to trial. After a six-day trial and several

hours of argument at the close of the plaintiff's case, the court granted our motion for directed verdict, ruling that the evidence presented confirmed that the communications by the CEO were covered by a qualified privilege and that, based on cross examination of the plaintiff and his witnesses, the defense established that there was no malicious conduct by the CEO.

Directed Verdict in Favor of Our Client in a High-Exposure and High-Risk Defamation Lawsuit

We secured a directed verdict in favor of our client in a high-exposure and high-risk defamation lawsuit. We were called to try the case on behalf of the CEO of a local chapter of a well-known national non-profit after the plaintiff was permitted to amend the complaint to seek punitive damages from the CEO personally. When we received the case, the trial was set to begin in four weeks. We secured a brief continuance and built a client-specific defense focused on the CEO while working with a team of other firms representing other defendants, including the non-profit organization which had formerly represented all of the defendants jointly.

Background: The plaintiff was a volunteer at a camp. A decision was made to separate him from the camp and the organization. The plaintiff alleged that the CEO personally defamed him by alerting other volunteers and committees of the decision. He demanded an eight-figure sum prior to trial.

After a six-day trial and several hours of argument at the close of the plaintiff's case, the court granted our motion for directed verdict, ruling that the evidence presented confirmed that the communications by the CEO were covered by a qualified privilege and that, based on cross examination of the plaintiff and his witnesses, the defense established that there was no malicious conduct by the CEO.

The case had been pending since 2020, and in fewer than 100 days, we became familiar with the factual and legal details to bring home a win for the client.

Summary Judgment in Wrongful Death, Negligent Security Case Involving the Shooting of a 16-Year-Old

The plaintiff's decedent was shot and killed while allegedly on his way home from school. We were able to prove that the young man was a trespasser on the common area of the property where he was shot, even though his aunt was a tenant in the apartment complex. The decedent's family claimed he was on his way to see her. Our investigation revealed that he was connected to local gangs and that, at the time of his shooting, he was wearing a ski mask (in Florida) and carrying a hand gun.

Thought Leadership

September 1, 2025

On the Pulse...Jacksonville Office Expands and Leads Litigation Practice in Northern Florida

March 1, 2021

On the Pulse...Our Jacksonville Office