

C. VANCE CHRISTOPHER



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Overview

An attorney with over 35 years of experience, Vance Christopher focuses on commercial and fiduciary litigation as well as probate, insurance and personal injury law.

Having tried over 40 criminal jury trials and 50 civil trials, Vance has a deep understanding of litigation and trial process. His work as lead trial counsel started as an assistant district attorney for the Harris County District Attorney's office, then as a trial lawyer at Crain Caton & James. In addition, he has completed extensive arbitration training and has considerable experience in settling cases.

Recently included on the Best Lawyers List, a BL Rankings publication, for Commercial Litigation and Personal Injury Litigation-Defendants, Vance's experience is informed by more than 38 years of trying cases to judges, juries, and arbitrators. When the case justifies it, he can assemble and manage a formidable team of trial and appellate lawyers and staff to litigate commercial disputes, large probate matters, fiduciary claims (including commercial, guardianship, trust and estate matters), and mass torts.

Vance's record of trying cases has earned him a place on the list of Texas Super Lawyers for Business Litigation, by Thomson Reuters for 14 years in a row. In addition to trying and arbitrating cases, Vance also takes great satisfaction in collaborating with clients to resolve their litigation problems before trial. He has found that clients are better able to solve their litigation problems when their lawyer is an effective and experienced trial lawyer. In other words, an effective litigator must first be an experienced trial lawyer.

Practices

[Commercial Litigation](#)
[Fiduciary Litigation](#)
[Insurance and Personal Injury](#)
[Probate, Trust and Guardianship](#)

Education

- J.D., University of Texas School of Law
- B.A., Davidson College

Admissions & Certifications

- State Bar of Texas
- United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas
- U.S. Tax Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- Texas Board of Legal Specialization, Personal Injury Trial Law and Civil Trial Law
- A.A. White Dispute Resolution Center, University of Houston, Advanced Arbitration Skills

Experience

Trial & Arbitration

Commercial

- Represented multiple businesses in prosecuting claims in arbitration for breach of contract and deceptive trade practices against a publicly traded company; after a five-day hearing, obtained an award from the AAA for more than 10 times the last settlement offer
- Obtained finding denying counterclaim in contract dispute over refinery operations
- Obtained favorable judgment for client in an employment contract dispute, currently on appeal
- Dispute between closely held corporations involving breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, fraud, self-dealing, lease construction, tax issues and minority oppression claims
- Represented Defendant insurance company against Plaintiff's claims for breach of contract, Insurance Code and DTPA violations, and breach of the duty of good faith and fair dealing. Defense verdict and recovery of portion of client's attorneys' fees under DTPA counterclaim
- Breach of contract
- Prosecuted declaratory judgment action for breach of contract. Plaintiff counterclaimed for bad faith and violation of DTPA and Insurance Code. Defense verdict; no liability and recovery of attorney's fees
- Breach of contract. Defense verdict; no liability
- Breach of contract against insurance company. Obtained coverage for client at trial court. Affirmed on appeal by Texas Supreme Court
- Obtained finding client did not owe additional \$1 million in dispute over insurance coverage
- After cross-examination of Plaintiff, settled Plaintiffs' \$1.25 million breach of contract, theft of trade secrets, and breach of fiduciary duty claims for less than 10% of lowest pre-trial demand

Probate

- Will contest. Successfully defended will
- Will contest. Successfully defended client's rights under the will
- Represented Trustee asserting and defending against breaches of fiduciary duty involving self-dealing and complex financial transactions and tax issues

Personal Injury

- Over 20 jury verdicts on personal injury claims including many

for serious bodily injuries, death and sexual assault

Litigated But Not Tried to Verdict or Judgment

Commercial

- Breach of contract fraud, bad faith claims between oil and gas corporation and its employee. Multiple summary judgment hearings on liability, contractual and extra-contractual, and statutes of limitations defenses
- Breach of contract, Insurance Code, Deceptive Trade Practices Act and bad faith claims asserted by insured against carrier over life insurance and accidental death insurance provided by employer
- Breach of contract, Insurance Code and bad faith claims by small business against its insurance carrier resulting from storm loss
- Represented major brokerage house and individuals in state and federal district court and in arbitration for disputes over covenants not to compete
- Mass tort litigation management

Probate/Trust/Guardianship

- Disputes among heirs over will contest, ownership and characterization of estate assets including corporate governance and how to maintain the viability of corporations
- Breach of contract, fraud, breach of fiduciary duty, and civil theft claims against trustee and individuals over joint venture interests in oil and gas fields
- Disputes over guardianships of wards and putative wards involving complicated medical, financial and family issues
- Disputes between family members over wills, capacity and related trust issues

Affiliations

- Houston Bar Association
- State Bar of Texas Pattern Jury Charge Committee
Family/Probate, member: This committee was charged with drafting standardized jury questions to be used by judges and lawyers in probate and fiduciary cases across Texas
- Texas Bar Foundation, life member
- Houston Bar Foundation, member
- American Board of Trial Advocates, discussion leader, "Lunch with the Masters: Advanced Evidence and Discovery"

Community & Civic

- CASA - Child Advocates

Honors & Awards

- Rated "AV," Martindale-Hubbell
- American Board of Trial Advocates
- Best Lawyers - Commercial Litigation and Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants, BL Rankings, 2019-2020
- Texas Super Lawyers - Business Litigation, Thomson Reuters, 2005-2019

Publications & Presentations

- Fiduciary Litigation Course: *Considerations Checklist for Fiduciary Litigation Related to Estate Planning/Probate/Executors/Trusts*, State Bar of Texas
- All Day Ethics Program: *Navigating The Quagmire (AKA Trying not to Get Sued) In the Estate, Trust & Guardianship Area*, Houston Bar Association, 2013
- *Experts 101: The Who, What, When and Why*, Houston Bar Association, various dates
- Professionalism Day, Bench Bar Conference, breakout discussion leader, Houston Bar Association, various dates
- Lunch with the Masters, discussion leader, American Board of Trial Advocates