

Natalie Spears

Overview

Natalie Spears is a trial lawyer and represents clients in state and federal courts across the US in a wide range of matters, including consumer class actions, IP, media and advertising disputes, complex commercial and real estate litigation. She is lauded by clients as "tenacious and pragmatic" and is recognized for her courtroom achievements. As a member of Dentons' US Board and head of its global Technology, Media and Telecommunications sector, Natalie sets direction for the firm's commitment to exceptional client service.

Natalie offers clients advice that is creative, concise and uses common sense. She leads teams with this approach to achieve successful outcomes in litigation. Her representative clients include major global media and entertainment, retail, real estate and consumer products and services companies.

Her work and litigation victories were featured in *Leading Lawyer Magazine*, Top 10 in Illinois, earning a spot on the cover in the "Leading Women Lawyers" edition, March 2015, and as part of the *National Law Journal's* "2014 Chicago Litigation Department of Year".

Natalie also is routinely called upon to secure the media's First Amendment rights, often in high-profile cases, including the trials of former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, Drew Peterson, Conrad Black, R. Kelly, and the Jennifer Hudson family murders.

Experience

Natalie's most recent consumer class action win involved a complete summary judgment victory as lead counsel for Redbox in a putative privacy class action, which the Seventh Circuit affirmed in October 2014, following an earlier interlocutory appeal eliminating other claims. *Sterk v. Redbox Autom. Retail*, 770 F.3d 618 (7th Cir. 2014), 672 F.3d 535 (2012).

Her most recent trial win was as one of the lead counsel for the St. Louis Rams in 2013 in a dispute over the Rams' NFL stadium lease. The arbitration panel awarded the Rams a US\$734 million stadium improvement plan and attorneys' fees, stating, "it is difficult to envision that the Rams could have obtained better representation for the arbitration."

Other representative matters include:

- Lead and co-lead counsel in the successful defense of numerous putative class actions, prevailing at the pleadings stage, on class certification and at trial, on various types of claims, including allegations of false advertising, statutory violations, consumer fraud, antitrust violations and breach of contract.
- Lead defense counsel for Golf Channel in a breach of contract, trade secrets and Computer Fraud and Abuse Act software case; dismissal granted. *EZLinks v. GolfNow, et al.*, No. 12 C 3630 (N.D. Ill. August 8, 2013).
- Lead counsel for Pulte Homes in defeating an alleged US\$25 million defamation, unfair competition and breach of contract case on summary judgment. *DePinto v. Pulte Homes et al.*, No. 07 C 2384 (N.D. Ill. March 3, 2011).

- Lead trial lawyer representing Rug Doctor on false advertising claims in federal court and National Advertising Division proceedings against competitor Bissell Homecare, Inc. *Bissell Homecare v. Rug Doctor, Inc.*, 10 CV 972 (W.D. Mich. 2011). ¹¹ _{SEP}
- Defeated TRO and complete defense award in arbitration proceedings in connection with a contractual software platform dispute involving allegedly proprietary technology. *Journal Sentinel v. Classified Ventures*, 08 C 5998 (N.D. Ill. October 23, 2008).
- Prevailed for the Chicago Cubs and a Tribune Company subsidiary in a class-action trial with substantial media attention, involving allegations of ticket scalping and consumer advertising fraud. *Cavoto v. Chicago National League Ball Club*, 2006 WL 2291181 (Ill. App. Ct.), appeal denied, 222 Ill. 2d 569 (2006).
- Secured a complete dismissal on jurisdictional grounds in an Internet defamation case brought by former professional athlete Bo Jackson. *Jackson v. California Newspapers, et. al.*, 2005 WL 2850116 (N.D. Ill. October 27, 2005).
- Co-chaired a multimillion US dollar breach of contract dispute, which resulted in a complete defense verdict following a week-long bench trial. *In re Allied Products Corporation*, 00 B 28798, Opinion of Court (N.D. Ill. January 2005).
- Secured an arbitration win for Salton, Inc. (makers of the George Foreman Grill, Juiceman Juicer and other housewares) in a multimillion US dollar breach of contract, trademark and royalties dispute with the company's well-known spokesperson. *Kordich et al. v. Salton et al.*, AAA No. 75 Y 133 00128 99 (August 24, 2000).

Recognition

Honors and Awards

- Chambers-ranked for Media and Entertainment Litigation in Illinois, 2007-2015
- Illinois Super Lawyers, Top 100 Illinois Lawyers: 2008-2015; Top 50 Women Lawyers: 2009-2015
Recognized as an "IP Star", *Managing IP's Guide*, *Euromoney Legal Guide*, 2014-2015
- Legal 500-ranked for Media, Technology and Telecoms, 2013-2015
- Named to Best Lawyers in America for First Amendment Litigation, 2016
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, "40 under 40: Making a Difference in Chicago," November 2010 Heartland Alliance Annual Human Rights Award, May 2005
- National Law Journal's "40 Under 40" list of top litigators, July 2002

Activities and Affiliations

Natalie strongly believes in a lawyer's responsibility to support the legal aid community, and served in 2013 as the President of the Chicago Bar Foundation, which champions funding and access to justice for those in need of pro bono legal representation. Other affiliations include:

- Chair, Board of Directors of the Black Ensemble Theater, 2015, member 2009-present
- Seventh Circuit Bar Association, Board of Trustees, member 2013-2015
- President, Chicago Inn of Court, 2008-2009, member 1997-present
- Chair, Leadership Council of the National Immigrant Justice Center, 2001-2009; member, 2009-2015
Board member, Governing Committee of ABA Forum on Communications Law, 2007-2009
- Leadership Greater Chicago fellow, 2002-2003
- Law clerk (1995) for the Honorable Michael J. Melloy, then-chief judge, US District Court for the Northern District of Iowa (now on the US Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals)



Areas of focus

Practices

- Class Action Defense
- Commercial Litigation
- Litigation and Dispute Resolution

Industry sectors

- Media, Entertainment and Sports
- Technology *Education*
- University of Michigan Law School, 1995, JD, cum laude
- University of Iowa, 1992, BA, with honors and highest distinction

Admissions and qualifications

Illinois

- US Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit
- US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit
- US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
- US District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan
- US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois
- US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Trial Bar