



MALCOLM E. WHEELER

Counsel Emeritus

wheeler@wtotrial.com | P 303.244.1870

*Top 10 Most Admired
Product Liability Lawyers
Nationwide*

—Law360

EDUCATION

Stanford Law School, J.D., 1969
Stanford Law Review, Editorial Board

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, S.B., 1966

GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Chief Counsel, United States Senate Select Committee to Study Law Enforcement Undercover Activities of Components of the Department of Justice (ABSCAM), 1982

OTHER EXPERIENCE

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (Partner)
Hughes Hubbard & Reed (Partner)
Parcel, Mauro, Hultin & Spaanstra, P.C. (Director)

ADMISSIONS

Colorado

Malcolm Wheeler is known for his long history of civil defense victories, especially in product liability and class action lawsuits. Mal has served as national trial counsel for Ford, Pfizer, and Nissan, and national class action counsel for Whirlpool. In 2000, he won for Honda before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case that established the standard for federal preemption arguments in airbag litigation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Won a Colorado Supreme Court victory for Travelers in a case Law360 named a top-five insurance ruling of 2016.
- Assisted a biotech company in briefing to the Federal Circuit, resulting in reversal of an adverse ruling.
- Won a unanimous defense verdict for Nissan in a catastrophic accident lawsuit in California.
- Won an 88% reduction in the appeal of a punitive damages award in a case tried by another firm.
- Defeated class certification for Whirlpool in a refrigerator class action in Arkansas.
- Won for Pfizer in the first appellate preemption decision involving an antidepressant medication.
- WTO successfully defends Ford in four-month, certified class action trial.

INDUSTRIES

- Automotive
- Consumer Products & Services
- Healthcare
- Medical Devices & Pharmaceuticals

PRACTICE AREAS

- Appellate
- Class Actions
- Commercial Litigation
- Product Liability
- Catastrophic Injury Defense
- Mass Torts
- Antitrust & Competition

MALCOLM E. WHEELER

BIOGRAPHY

Malcolm Wheeler is known for his long history of civil defense victories, especially in product liability and class action lawsuits. Mal has served as national trial counsel for Ford, Pfizer, and Nissan, and national class action counsel for Whirlpool. In 2000, he won for Honda before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case that established the standard for federal preemption arguments in airbag litigation.

Mal has defended manufacturers at trial in several highly publicized cases, including the Ford Pinto criminal case, the damages trial in the Kearns windshield-wiper patent case, the first "no airbag" case tried to verdict, the first defective airbag case tried to verdict, and cases in the medical device, pharmaceutical, chemical, automotive, and appliance industries. He has served as national trial counsel for Ford, Pfizer, and Nissan, and as national class action counsel for Whirlpool. Mal has briefed and argued cases in the United States Supreme Court and in multiple United States Courts of Appeals and state appellate courts throughout the country.

Mal is an elected Fellow in the International Academy of Trial Lawyers and in the American College of Trial Lawyers. In 2010, *Product Liability Law360* named him one of the 10 most admired product liability lawyers in the United States. For several years beginning in 2010, *Chambers USA* named him one of only three nationwide "star individuals" in product liability. Mal has appeared on the *Colorado Super Lawyers*® Top 10 list multiple times and was the "top point getter" in 2010 and 2011. In 2011, Mal was featured on the cover and profiled in the annual publication.

Mal has been the designated media representative for several Fortune 500 companies in connection with major litigation. In that role, he has appeared on nationally broadcast television programs, including ABC's 20/20, CNN's Burden of Proof, Dateline NBC, and 90 Minutes (a European news show), as well as nationally broadcast radio programs.

CASES

- Won Colorado Supreme Court reversal of a unanimous court of appeals ruling in a case of national importance to the insurance industry. In its ruling for Travelers, the Court held that the "notice-prejudice rule" does not apply to "no-voluntary-payment" provisions in insurance policies. This was WTO's fifth consecutive, fully-argued victory before the Colorado Supreme Court in two-and-a-half years. Law360 named *Stresscon* one of the top five insurance rulings of 2016.
- Assisted a biotech company in an appellate briefing before the Federal Circuit, resulting in reversal of an adverse summary judgment and remand to the state court where our client had filed the complaint.

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- Won a unanimous defense verdict in California Superior Court for Nissan in a lawsuit involving a claim that an allegedly defective seat system resulted in the plaintiff's quadriplegia following a horrific car crash.
- Won an 88% reduction in the appeal of a punitive damages award in a case tried by another firm.
- Defeated certification of a multistate class action in Arkansas federal court involving claims that certain Whirlpool-made refrigerators were defective.
- Won an appeal for Pfizer in a groundbreaking preemption case before the Third Circuit.
- Defended Ford Motor Co. in a four-month certified class action trial involving \$2 billion in consumer fraud claims. On the day set for closing arguments, the plaintiffs agreed to a no-cash, coupon-based settlement for the California class and classes in three other states with pending parallel actions.
- Obtained dismissal with prejudice of plaintiffs' class action allegations in a putative nationwide class action alleging that more than one million of Whirlpool's refrigerators were defective.
- Won a reversal and a new trial on the punitive damages phase of a product liability case originally tried by another firm in 1998. Persuaded the second jury to award only one-third of the amount awarded in the initial trial.
- Obtained summary judgment for Pfizer on preemption grounds in a case alleging that a popular antidepressant caused suicide.
- Defeated class status and a recall attempt against Nissan in a putative class action involving airbags.
- Won exclusion of a star expert for the plaintiffs in antidepressant suicide litigation and won summary judgment for Pfizer in federal court in Kansas in a case alleging that the company's antidepressant led to the suicide of a minor.
- Obtained summary judgment for Pfizer in a case alleging wrongful death, failure to warn, and other claims involving the company's popular antidepressant, and won on appeal in the Ninth Circuit.
- Argued and won a U.S. Supreme Court victory for Honda in a precedent-setting case involving federal preemption standards as applied to airbags in the automotive industry.
- Won a New Hampshire "no airbag" trial for Ford before getting all no-airbag cases held preempted in *Geier* in the U.S. Supreme Court.

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- Won dismissal on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- Won dismissal of no-airbag claim on federal preemption grounds in the Michigan Court of Appeals.
- *Lebouef v. Ford* - Favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Wolfe v. Ford* - Favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Barnhill v. Ford* - Won a favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Angelopolus v. Ford* - Won a favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Hubbard v. Ford* - Favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Turnquest v. Ford* - Favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Waters v. Ford* - Favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Martin v. Ford* - Won a favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Teitloff v. Valcon Materials* - Won a favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Winters v. Ford* - Won a favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- *Wright v. Ford* - Won a favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.
- Won affirmance by the Texas Court of Appeals of a lower court decision granting summary judgment to Ford on federal preemption of a no-airbag claim.
- Won summary judgment on federal preemption grounds on inadequate warning labels claim.
- Won summary judgment from the district court in a design defect case. When plaintiffs appealed, the Court of Appeals affirmed in part, reversed in part, and remanded.

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- Won reversal by the Ninth Circuit of verdict for plaintiffs in a defamation action against Howard Hughes by the fired head of his Nevada operations.
- Successfully defended Ford Motor Co. against criminal charges of reckless homicide in the design of the Pinto automobile.
- Successfully defended the first "no-airbag" case tried to a verdict.
- Successfully defended the first airbag fatality case tried to verdict.
- Obtained a defense verdict in a fire fatality case alleging design defects in appliance.
- Won reversal in Tenth Circuit of plaintiff's verdict; case settled in hip implant case.
- Won affirmance in the Tenth Circuit of summary judgment on federal preemption grounds.
- Directed verdict on manufacturing defect; hung jury; case settled.
- Won dismissal of no-airbag case by Ninth Circuit on federal preemption grounds.
- Won favorable decision on federal preemption grounds in a no-airbag case.

TEACHING POSITIONS

- University of Iowa College of Law
Professor of Law, 1978-1979
- University of Kansas Law School
Associate Professor of Law, 1971-1973
Professor of Law, 1973-1974 and 1981-1983
- National Institute for Appellate Advocacy
Annual Advocacy Institute
Appellate Judges Conferences
CLE Programs

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BAR & COURT ADMISSIONS

- California (Inactive)
- Colorado
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 3rd Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 4th Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 6th Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 7th Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 8th Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit
- U.S. District Court, D. Colorado
- U.S. District Court, E.D. Michigan
- U.S. District Court, E.D. Texas
- U.S. District Court, E.D. Wisconsin
- U.S. District Court, N.D. Illinois

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LEGAL MEMBERSHIPS, ACTIVITIES & HONORS

MALCOLM E. WHEELER

- International Academy of Trial Lawyers
 - Fellow
- American College of Trial Lawyers
 - Fellow
- BTI Consulting
 - Client Service All-Star, 2011, 2013
- Product Liability Law360
 - Most Admired Product Liability Lawyer, 2010
- Product Liability Advisory Council
 - John Raleigh Lifetime Achievement Award, 2008
- Who's Who Legal: Litigation 2011-2017
- The International Who's Who/Lexology Index of Product Liability Defense Lawyers, 1997-2011, 2013-2017, 2024
- The International Who's Who/Lexology Index of Life Sciences Lawyers, 2008-2016, 2024
- The International Who's Who/Lexology Index of Business Lawyers: Commercial Litigation, 2011, 2013-2016, 2024
- Chambers USA
 - Product Liability - Nationwide, 2005-2018
 - Star Individual, 2010-2013
 - Leading Individual, Automobile, 2010-2014
 - Litigation: Trial Lawyer - Nationwide, 2013
 - Commercial Litigation - Colorado, 2005-2024
- The Legal 500 United States
 - Leading Lawyer, Litigation: Product Liability and Mass Tort Defense, 2007- 2013, 2015
- The Best Lawyers in America
 - Denver Product Liability Litigation - Defendants Lawyer of the Year, 2018, 2021, 2024
 - Denver Personal Injury Litigation - Defense Lawyer of the Year, 2012
 - Commercial Litigation, 2018-2025
 - Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants, 2003-2025
 - Product Liability Litigation - Defendants, 2003-2025
- Benchmark Litigation
 - Top 100 Trial Lawyers in America - 2015-2017
 - Commercial Litigation - National, 2011-2018
 - Commercial Litigation - Colorado, 2011-2018
 - Products Liability - National, 2012, 2014-2016
 - Products Liability - Colorado, 2013-2018
- The National Law Journal

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Top 10 Trial Lawyers, 1998
Colorado Super Lawyers
Personal Injury Defense: Products, 2022-2025
Civil Litigation Defense, 2006-2019, 2021
Top Point Getter, 2010, 2011
Top 10, 2008-2014
Top 100, 2008-2017
Law Week Colorado
"People's Court" Best Class Action/Mass Tort Defense Lawyer, 2011
Product Liability Lawyer of the Year, 2008
Who's Who in America, 1987-2011
Who's Who in American Law, 1998-2011
Who's Who in the West, 1996-2012
The Tenth Judicial Circuit Historical Society
Board Member, 2007-2010
Colorado Bar Association
American Bar Association
California Bar Association
American Law Institute
Restatement of the Law Third, Torts
Adviser, Concluding Provisions
Adviser, Apportionment of Liability
Adviser, General Principles
Adviser, Liability for Physical and Emotional Harm
Members Consultative Group, Products Liability
Restatement of the Law, Liability Insurance
Members Consultative Group
Euromoney's Expert Guides - Litigation and Product Liability
Product Liability Advisory Council
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ARTICLES & PRESENTATIONS

- Co-Author, "Litigation Financing: Balancing Access with Fairness," 13 J. Tort Law 2, (November 2020).
- "A Look Through Tinted Glass: What Does the Future Hold for Preemption in Motor Vehicle Litigation?," Prod. Safety Liab. Rptr., Vol. 39, No. 20, (May 16, 2011).
- "The Trial of Class Actions," presented at Product Liability Advisory Council, (April 28, 2011).

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- "The Changing Face of Preemption in Product Liability Actions," presented at American Bar Association's Emerging Issues In Motor Vehicle Product Liability Litigation, (March 31, 2011).
- "Preemption in Pharmaceutical Cases," presented at Association of American Law Schools, (January 8, 2011).
- Presenter, "Defending Against Punitive Damages Before and During Trial," DRI Masters of Product Liability Litigation Conference, (April 8, 2010).
- Presenter, "Using FDA Pronouncements to Defend Product Liability Claims," DRI Drug and Medical Device Conference, (May 14, 2009).
- Presenter, "Punitive Damages: How Much, How Far, What Conduct and Where Committed," The Network of Trial Law Firms' one-day Litigation Management SuperCourse, (January 31, 2003).
- Presenter, "Legal and Tactical Evidentiary Issues in Punitive Damages Cases," 2002 Annual Litigation Institute, (October 11, 2002).
- "Choice of Law: Little-Recognized Punitive Damages Issues," *Leader's Prod. Liab. L. & Strategy*, at 1, (March 1999).
- "Product Liability Aspects of the Risks of Technological Change," 25 *Can.-U.S. L.J.* 137, (1999).
- "How Now, *Daubert*: Dilemma About Application," *Leader's Prod. Liab. L. & Strategy*, at 1, (April 1997).
- "Honda Motor Co. v. Oberg: A Guide for Punitive Damages Reform," *Prod. Liab. Advisory*, at 8, (August 1994).
- "Defendants Confront Onerous Pretrial Tactics," *Leader's Prod. Liab. L. & Strategy*, at 1, (January 1993).
- "Strict Liability in Design-Defect Cases: A Doctrinal Structure in Need of a Foundation," *Wash. Legal Found. Legal Studies Division*, (November 16, 1990).
- "The Need for Narrow Tort Reform: Abolishing Strict Liability, in Product Liability Reform: Debating the Issues," K. Chilton ed., (1990).
- "A Proposal for Further Common Law Development of the Use of Punitive Damages in Modern Product Liability Litigation," 40 *Ala. L. Rev.* 919, (1989).
- "Comment on Landes's and Posner's Positive Economic Analysis of Products Liability," 14 *J. Legal Stud.* 575, (1985).

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- "Pre Dismissal Notice and Statutes of Limitations in Federal Class Actions After *American Pipe & Construction v. Utah*," 48 S. Cal. L. Rev. 771, (1985).
- "The Use of Criminal Sanctions to Regulate Product Safety," 13 J. Legal Stud. 593, (1984).
- "A Comment on Recent Developments in Judicial Imputation of Post-Manufacture Knowledge in Strict Liability Cases," 6 J. Prod. Liab. 127, (1983).
- "The Constitutional Case for Reforming Punitive Damages Procedures," 69 Va. L. Rev. 269, (1983).
- "Manufacturers' Criminal Liability," Chapter 1B in L. Frumer & M. Friedman, *Products Liability*, (1983).
- "Product Liability: Civil or Criminal," 17 Forum 250, (1981).
- *Enforcing Product Safety: A Maze of Legal Issues and Ramifications*, Nat'l L.J., (December 29, 1980).
- *Manufacturers: Wrong Targets for Threat of Criminal Sanctions?*, Nat'l L.J., (December 22, 1980).
- *Cost-Benefit Analysis on Trial: A Case of Delusion and Reality*, Nat'l L. J., (October 20, 1980).
- *The Public's Costly Mistrust of Cost-Benefit Safety Analysis*, Nat'l L.J., (October 13, 1980).
- "In Defense of Economic Equal Protection," 22 U. Kan. L. Rev. 1, (1974).
- "Parole Eligibility for Prisoners Serving Consecutive Sentences in Kansas: A Comment," 21 U. Kan. L. Rev. 167, (1973).
- "The Statute of Limitations for Antitrust Damage Actions: Four Years or Forty?," with Robert J. Jones, 41 U. Chi. L. Rev. 72, (1973).
- "Antitrust Treble-Damage Actions: Do They Work?," 61 Cal. L. Rev. 1319, (1973).
- "Toward a Theory of Limited Punishment II: The Eighth Amendment After *Furman v. Georgia*," 25 Stan. L. Rev. 62, (1972).
- "Toward a Theory of Limited Punishment: An Examination of the Eighth Amendment," 24 Stan. L. Rev. 838, (1972).
- "Some Observations on Tie-Ins, the Single-Product Defense, Exclusive Dealing and Regulated Industries," 60 Cal. L. Rev. 1557, (1972).

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- "A Reexamination of Antitrust Law and Exclusive Territorial Grants by Patentees," 119 U. Pa. L. Rev. 642, (1971).
- "Judicial Enforcement of Contract-Arbitration Agreements," Note, 21 Stan. L. Rev. 673, (1969).
- "Toward the Peaceful Modification of Treaties: The Panama Canal Proposals," 21 Stan. L. Rev. 938, (1969).