

Debbie Berman

Partner

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Areas of Focus

Business Litigation

Trade Secrets and
Restrictive Covenants

Trademark, Advertising, and
Unfair Competition

Intellectual Property

Tariff Task Force



Overview

Debbie Berman is a first chair trial lawyer, who leads cases and client teams for multinational companies facing significant business challenges. An experienced advisor to boards and the C-suite, she helps clients resolve complex commercial matters including contractual obligations, vendor relationships, and strategic partnerships. Debbie frequently is involved in matters that make national headlines, as well as situations that require discretion and sensitivity.

A Co-Chair of the firm's Business Litigation and the Trade Secrets and Restrictive Covenants practices, she is known for her deep knowledge and experience, savvy leadership and ability to develop next generation talent. Whether at trial, on appeal, in negotiation, or through arbitration, Debbie is a prominent voice and skilled advocate for domestic and multinational companies in their toughest and most important disputes.

Her deep experience and diverse skills are utilized on matters involving complicated business disputes, trade secrets, restrictive covenants, unfair competition, trademark protection, and First Amendment litigation related to new social media platforms. She also helps develop policies and build corporate culture to protect trade secrets in the United States and international jurisdictions.

Debbie is the creator and co-author of Jenner & Block's publication *Understanding and Litigating Trade Secrets: An Outline for Analyzing the Statutory and Common Law of Trade Secrets in Illinois*, and is a recognized thought leader on the changing landscape of restrictive covenants.



Business leaders need practical and insightful advice on complex cases and confidential matters. Our work together starts with listening and learning about the issues so that we can craft solutions that are a solid fit with the organization's culture, strategy and legal needs.”

Areas of Focus

- Business Litigation
- Trade Secrets and Restrictive Covenants
- Trademark, Advertising, and Unfair Competition
- Intellectual Property
- Tariff Task Force
- Content, Media, and Entertainment
- Technology
- Life Sciences
- AI Task Force
- Reproductive Health Task Force
- First Amendment and Content Moderation

Representative Matters

- Served as lead international counsel for manufacturer against former senior executives and major distributors in a federal trial resulting in a jury verdict of approximately \$114 million on behalf of the client and affirmed on appeal.
- Guided General Dynamics in a qui tam action concerning nuclear powered submarines and won dismissal of the claims with prejudice.
- Successfully obtained summary judgment, affirmed by the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, while representing a Fortune 500 company in a suit brought under Title VII.
- Represents a social media company in defending right of publicity class action cases concerning certain evolving areas of the law between new media and the First Amendment.
- Obtained summary judgment on claims for defamation and unfair competition for major media companies in First Amendment matters such as the alleged portrayal of the plaintiff in a major motion picture.
- Represents clients in government contracts litigation, including serving as trial counsel for General Dynamics Corp. in a matter involving complex tax accounting issues related to a multi-year procurement contract with the

United States Air Force.

Credentials

Admissions

- Illinois

Education

- Harvard Law School, JD, *cum laude*, 1990
- Brandeis University, BA, *summa cum laude*; High Honors in Economics; Phi Beta Kappa, Economics, 1987

Court Admissions

- US Supreme Court
- US Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- US Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit
- US District Court, Northern District of Illinois
- US District Court, Northern District of Illinois (Trial Bar)
- US District Court, Southern District of Illinois
- US Court of Federal Claims
- US Tax Court

Service / Recognition

Awards

- *Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America*, 2026
- *Lawdragon 500 Leading Global Entertainment, Sports, & Media Lawyers*, 2025-2026
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, Notable Nonprofit Board Leaders, 2024
- Chicago Bar Association's Alliance for Women Founder's Award, 2024
- *The American Lawyer*, Litigator of the Week Finalist, March 6, 2020; Litigator of the Week Finalist, April 24, 2020; Litigator of the Week Finalist, August 27, 2021; Midwest Trailblazer, 2021
- *The American Lawyer*, Midwest Trailblazer, Intellectual Property, 2023
- *The Best Lawyers in America*, First Amendment Law, 2024-2026; Trade Secrets Law, 2026
- *Chambers USA*, Media & Entertainment, 2006-2007; Litigation: General Commercial (Illinois), 2021-2025; Intellectual Property: Trade Secrets, 2025
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, Notable Litigators & Trial Attorneys, 2023; 40 Under 40, 2005; Notable Gen X Leaders in Accounting, Consulting, and Law, 2021

- Decalogue Society of Lawyers, Righteousness Award, 2015; Decalogue Society Award, 2020
- Great Midwest Region BBYO, BBG Alumna of the Year Award, 2012
- *Illinois Super Lawyers*, 2005-2024, in First Amendment, Business Litigation, Media, and Advertising.
- Harvard Law Society of Illinois, Role Model, 2021
- Jewish United Fund / Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago
Davis, Gidwitz & Glasser Award, 2005
- *Law Bulletin Publishing Company*, 40 Under 40 Illinois Attorneys to Watch, 2002
- *Lawdragon Magazine*, 500 New Stars, New Worlds, 2006
- Leading Lawyers Network, Top 100 Leading Women Lawyers in Illinois, 2010-2011; Top 100 Leading Women Business Lawyers in Illinois, 2010-2011; Advertising & Media Law, 2004-2019; Arts, Entertainment & Sports Law, 2004-2019; Civil Rights/Constitutional Law, 2004-2019
- *Legal 500*, General Commercial Disputes, 2020, 2021; Litigation: Trade Secrets, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2020; Intellectual Property - 2007; Trade Secrets, 2007, 2017; Intellectual Property - Trade Secrets (Litigation and Non-Contentious Matters), 2018; Leading Lawyer, 2021
- Shalva, Rodef Shalom Award, 2009

Community

- Anti-Defamation League, Chair, Midwest Chapter, 2024-2026; Board Member, 2009-present
- BBYO, Inc., Inaugural Chair and Member, Chicago Area Friends & Alumni Network, 2008-present
- Brandeis University Alumni Admissions Council, Member, 1990-present; Former Chair, Chicago Area
- Brandeis University National Alumni Association, Vice President, 2001-2004; Club President, Chicago Area, 1998-2001
- Crohn's and Colitis Foundation (Illinois Chapter), Major Gifts Committee, 2005-2007; Co-Chair, Public Relations Subcommittee, 2006-2007
- Economic Club of Chicago, Member
- EZRA Multi-Service Center, Committee Chair, 2001-2003; Committee Member, 1996-2006
- Harvard Law Society of Illinois, President, 2024; Board Member, 2016-present
- Homewood-Flossmoor High School District #233, Board of Education Member, 2014-present; Vice President/Secretary, 2021-present
- Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), Chair, Audit Committee, 2021-present; Chair, Budget and Finance Operational Units and Support Subcommittee, 2019-2021; Member, Board of Governors, 2013-2015, 2021-present; Committee Member, 2012-2013; 2015-2021
- Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, Member, Board of Directors, 1998-2003
- Jewish United Fund / Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, Board of Directors, Member, 2003-present; Former Executive Committee Member; Former Vice Chair; Community Foundation for Jewish Education Chair,

- 2014-2017; Israel and Overseas Commission, Chair, 2011-2014, Member, 2011-present, Kyiv Kehillah Committee Chair, 2008-2010, Lawyers' Division Various Positions, 1990-present, Secretary, 2006-2007; Leadership Development Advisory Committee, Member, 2007-present; Leadership Development Committee, Chair, 2005-2007, Committee Member, 1995-2003; Trades, Industries and Professions Chair, 2006-2008
- Leadership Greater Chicago, Board Member, 2007-2016; Fellow, 2006-2007
 - Temple Anshe Sholom, Vice President, Board of Trustees, 2001-2007
 - United Jewish Communities National Young Leadership Cabinet, Member, and various portfolio holder, 1997-2003
 - Wexner Heritage Foundation, Graduate

Service to the Bar

- INTA (International Trademark Association) North American Amicus Committee, 2024
- American Bar Association, Member; Communications Law Forum; Section of Intellectual Property; Section of Litigation; Section of Media Law; Women in Communications Law - Chicago Regional Representative
- American Bar Foundation, Fellow
- American Intellectual Property Law Association
- Chicago Bar Association, Member
- Illinois State Bar Association, Member; Civil Practice Division; Intellectual Property Division
- Intellectual Property Law Association of Chicago, Trade Secrets Committee, Chair, 2020-present