



William S. Cook

Partner

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William Cook focuses his practice on appellate work, general liability and casualty, transportation, employment law, professional liability and insurance coverage litigation. Bill serves as the regional managing partner of Wilson Elser's Detroit, Michigan, office.

Insurance Coverage

Bill helps clients identify and prevent exposures and, if they occur, capably manage reaction and recovery. He handles virtually every type of case – from a small claim to the most complex legal matter as well as the related transactional and jurisdictional issues.

Bill is called upon frequently by insurers and their third-party administrators to closely analyze policy wording and render opinions as to the nature and scope of coverage. Guided by the knowledge that a well-researched, well-reasoned opinion can help avoid future litigation, he opines on such issues as reservation of rights, duty to defend, loss allocations, and duties owed by the insurer and insured to one another. His interpretations are informed by a thorough investigation and understanding of the *facts* surrounding each claim, and keeping abreast of related statutes and regulations as well as various – and sometimes conflicting – judicial interpretations.

Complex Tort & General Casualty

Bill's tort practice generally entails defending clients involved in automobile accidents and against premises liability claims. He often defends trucking companies and their drivers in third-party, no-fault claims under Michigan law. He also has experience with toxic tort claims.

Appellate

Throughout his career, Bill has handled appeals before state appellate courts in Michigan, Illinois and California in addition to appeals before the Sixth and Seventh circuits. The appeals have covered numerous topics ranging from contract and tort issues to insurance

Services

- Appellate
- Complex Tort & General Casualty
- Employment & Labor
- Insurance & Reinsurance Coverage
- Product Liability, Prevention & Government Compliance
- Canada
- Professional Liability & Services
- Transportation

coverage disputes, including cases involving bad faith in which Bill mounts a particularly aggressive defense.

Employment Law

Bill's practice involves defending clients against all forms of employment-related claims, including discrimination, harassment and retaliation claims, based on both statutory and common law. He has successfully defended clients before the EEOC, state agencies in Michigan and Illinois, and in federal and state courts in Michigan and Illinois.

Education

- Michigan State University College of Law (J.D., *summa cum laude*, 2005)
- Michigan State University College of James Madison (B.A., 2002)

Bar Admissions

- Illinois
- Michigan

Court Admissions

- U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Central District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Michigan

Awards & Honors

- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2024-2026
- Winner of 2004 Pepperdine Entertainment Law Moot Court competition

Publications

July 27, 2023

Law360 Publishes Cook and High on Religious Accommodation Law

Law360 / Expert Analysis

Winter 2023

Cook and High Offer Tips to Simplify Legal Writing

Labor and Employment Lawnotes

January 18, 2023

A Close Friendship Is Not Enough to Maintain a “Third-Party” Retaliation Claim

October 3, 2022, Fall Edition

Labor and Employment Lawnotes Publishes Cook and High on the Use of Contractions

State Bar of Michigan Labor and Employment Lawnotes

August 3, 2022

Sexual Orientation Is Protected under Michigan’s Civil Rights Law

July 15, 2022

Michigan Court of Appeals: Pandemic-Related Trial Protocols Did Not Deprive Plaintiff of a Fair Trial

June 30, 2022

Sixth Circuit Affirms First Amendment Protections for University Professor Refusing to Use Transgender Pronouns

June 21, 2022

Michigan Court of Appeals Upholds Block Billing – If Entries Are Adequately Detailed

March 11, 2022

COVID-19 Business Income Losses Are Not Covered by Insurance Under Michigan Law

January 5, 2022

Michigan’s New Cannabis Liability Insurance Requirements Raise Concerns by Licensees, Insurers

Client Wins

Cook and Opalewski Secure Full Dismissal for Condo Association and President with Strategic Trial Motions

William Cook (Partner- Detroit) and Paula Opalewski (Associate-Detroit) secured the dismissal of all claims in Mecosta County Circuit Court, Michigan, on behalf of a condominium association and its president. This case stemmed from a dispute at a residential condominium development site. The plaintiffs, owners of two properties with houses, brought claims against the condominium association, its president, the developer, and several neighbors in the development. The plaintiffs asserted three counts against the association: violation of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act/Michigan Condominium Act (MCA), including alleged failure to permit inspection of the books and recds of the association; breach of the condominium bylaws; and claims of membership oppression. Following a bench trial that began in June 2024, the court granted Bill and Paula’s motions for involuntary dismissal of two counts at the close of the plaintiffs’ proofs in January 2025. The remaining count was dismissed in the judge’s written opinion and order regarding the

bench trial, issued on September 25, 2025, resulting in a complete defense victory for Wilson Elser's clients.

Del Gatto, Cook & Beres Successfully Defend Canadian Company in U.S. Trucking Accident

Brian Del Gatto (Partner-Phoenix, AZ), William Cook (Partner-Detroit, MI), and Katherine Beres (Of-Counsel-Detroit, MI) prevailed on behalf of a Canadian international logistics company in Monroe County Circuit Court, Monroe, Michigan. The plaintiff alleged that when the vehicle she was a passenger in stopped in the dark in the middle of an unlit interstate highway at night and was rear-ended by a semi-truck driven by our client's driver, the driver was at fault. However, the truck's dash camera video of the accident clearly demonstrated that the vehicle that plaintiff occupied was not visible until one second prior to the accident thereby creating a sudden and unavoidable collision. When the plaintiff refused to negotiate in good faith, Brian, Bill, and Kate filed a dispositive motion explaining how the evidence demonstrated that the driver was not negligent. The circuit court agreed and dismissed the case.

Del Gatto, Cook and Beres Secure Summary Judgment Based on Irrefutable Dash Cam Video in Michigan Trucking Accident Case

Brian Del Gatto (Partner-Phoenix, AZ), William Cook (Partner-Detroit, MI) and Katherine Beres (Associate-Detroit, MI) obtained summary judgment in the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, on behalf of Wilson Elser's client, an international Canadian logistics company. The plaintiff alleges that when his vehicle collided with a semi-truck driven by our client's driver, the driver was at fault. However, the dash camera video of the accident clearly shows the driver remained in his lane on the expressway and that the plaintiff lost control of his vehicle, causing the collision. When the plaintiff's counsel refused to voluntarily dismiss the lawsuit, Brian, Bill and Kate filed a dispositive motion explaining how the video demonstrated that the plaintiff caused the accident, not our client's driver. The federal judge in a strong decision found that the collision was 100 percent the fault of the plaintiff and that no reasonable juror would conclude otherwise. The court therefore dismissed the case. This decision saved the client insurer significant legal fees and exposure to serious injuries as well as a large settlement demand. This decision supports that the use of dash cams in the commercial trucking setting has a positive return on investment.

\$74 Million Cliffhanger Ends with Affirmance on Appeal

Edward Garson (Partner-San Francisco), William Cook (Partner-Detroit), and Francis Torrance (Of Counsel-San Francisco) brought to a satisfactory conclusion the hugely contentious case, *TransMart, Inc. v. San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit System* (BART). In the underlying case, defended by Ed Garson, Francis Torrance and other members of the San Francisco team in 2019, TransMart entered into an option contract with BART, giving TransMart the opportunity to lease space in BART's train stations for retail space. When the deal fell apart and BART rejected TransMart's effort to exercise the option, TransMart sought \$90+ million in damages. The jury unanimously ruled against the plaintiff's breach of contract action and 9–3 against their breach of covenant of good faith claim. On April 28, 2022, Ed argued the appeal and Bill was the chief author of the appellate briefs. The Court of Appeal of the State of California, First Appellate District wasted no time in agreeing with Ed and Bill in all respects. Another great win for BART, a

long-standing client of the firm.