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TOP 40 UNDER 40 LAWYERS



2025



JOHN STOKES

STRIS & MAHER LLP

CERRITOS

John Stokes has built a litigation practice centered on complex commercial disputes and appeals, with recent work spanning emerging industries like cryptocurrency and national-level employee benefits litigation.

He joined Stris & Maher in 2017 after graduating from law school in 2014 and completing two clerkships. He clerked for Judge Paul Gardephe in the Southern District of New York and Judge Raymond Fisher on the Ninth Circuit.

"I was drawn to the firm by a combination of three things: its entrepreneurial spirit, the people being both incredibly talented and incredibly kind, and the ability to get major responsibility on major cases from the start," Stokes said.

His recent work includes a case involving one of the nation's largest industrial-scale bitcoin miners. The dispute centered on allegations over the wrongful termination of hosting contracts valued in the hundreds of millions. *In re: Rhodium Encore LLC*, 24-90448 (Bankr. S.D. Tex., filed Aug. 24, 2024).

Stokes helped guide a team of more than a dozen lawyers through the multi-forum battle, which began in state court and arbitration before culminating in a week-long trial in the Southern District of Texas. The case concluded with Rhodium achieving a \$186 million recovery through a transaction with its former adversary.

"The Rhodium case involved an incredibly challenging mix of procedural obstacles and time pressure," Stokes said. "We started in Texas state court, got the case moved to arbitration, dealt with multiple concurrent appeals in the Texas state court system, and then ended up going to trial in federal bankruptcy court on an expedited schedule — we basically litigated an entire federal case in two and a half months."

Stokes has also worked on issues involving arbitration and employee benefit litigation. In a separate matter, he briefed and argued a Tenth Circuit appeal concerning the enforceability of individual arbitration agreements in representative actions brought under ERISA. *Harrison v. Envision Management Services*, 22-1098 (10th Cir. 2023).

He has co-lead briefing in parallel appellate matters across multiple circuits.

His practice also includes *Grasshopper House LLC v. Clean & Sober Media*, a competitor suit where the plaintiff originally sought more than \$180 million. The case has been ongoing for over seven years, and at the conclusion of its first iteration, Stris & Maher earned a *Daily Journal* "Top Defense Verdict" for the defense clients. *Grasshopper House LLC v. Clean & Sober Media*, 19SMCV02184 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Dec. 20, 2019).

Stokes noted how established legal frameworks are being tested by new industries. "Cases like Rhodium illustrate how established legal frameworks are being stretched by emerging markets such as the crypto industry," he said. "The issues we're seeing today — contract enforcement, insolvency, and fiduciary obligations in the context of digital assets — would have been unthinkable a decade ago."