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SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

Top 100 Lawyers AND DISTINGUISHED COUNSEL



PETER STRIS

STRIS & MAHER LLP
COMPLEX CIVIL LITIGATION
BEVERLY HILLS

Inside the Delaware Court of Chancery, a Stris & Maher team faced off against a Kirkland & Ellis trial group representing the other side of a $250 million earnout dispute. The case involved the founders of Unknown Worlds, the studio behind the video game franchise Subnautica, in a fight over corporate governance and money owed after the studio's sale. "Our firm went to trial against a large Kirkland & Ellis team in the Delaware Court of Chancery and secured a sweeping victory," Stris said.

That victory sits alongside another the firm secured this year: a settlement on behalf of nearly 300,000 current and former AT&T employees, who alleged the company underpaid pension benefits by relying on outdated mortality assumptions. "We litigated that case for more than five years before reaching a $184.1 million settlement this year," Stris said.

Stris graduated from Harvard Law School in 2000 and has practiced business litigation since. "What drew me to business litigation in particular was that the disputes are rarely just about abstract legal questions. They involve real companies, real economic stakes, and real-world messiness," he said. Over the past two years, Stris & Maher has obtained close to $1 billion for plaintiffs, a result Stris attributes to concentrating the firm's resources on high-stakes matters.

Getting those matters in the first place is, in Stris's account, the harder task. "Because we litigate with and against America's leading megafirms, our biggest challenge is getting in the room. Once we do, and clients can see the judgment, experience and strategic thinking we bring to the table, we're often found to be the right choice," he said.

The firm has added more than a dozen lawyers this year, including a group of intellectual-property litigators that includes Mieke Malmberg, herself a Top 100 Lawyer honoree. Stris said the firm plans to add two dozen more lawyers "in short order," describing the approach as building strength on strength rather than growth for its own sake.

Stris & Maher has also expanded geographically, opening offices in Washington, D.C. and Dallas, breaking ground on a headquarters in Beverly Hills, and planning an entry into New York. Stris described the moves as part of a strategy to build a national platform for business litigation.

The firm brought on marketing strategist Michael Fanuele this year, whose past campaigns include Dos Equis's "The Most Interesting Man in the World" and Arby's "We Have the Meats," to help shape the firm's brand as it scales.

"I think of my role as looking several years ahead and working backward. What kinds of matters should we be handling? Which people would make us materially better? Where do we need to be physically present? And what does the institution need to support all of that?" Stris said. "We have tremendous momentum right now, and the opportunity is to turn that momentum into an enduring national institution — a new center of gravity in American litigation."

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Top 100 Lawyers 2025





Peter Stris

Stris & Maher LLP

Cerritos

Peter Stris never planned to become a lawyer. The founder of Stris & Maher LLP originally intended to write music for films during college, but somewhere between winning a national debate championship and losing a recording contract, his trajectory shifted toward the courtroom rather than the recording studio.

"I realized I was less interested in background scores and more interested in front-line arguments," Stris said. "Law was a natural fit."

More than 20 years later, Stris has argued 10 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and built a litigation practice that crossed a significant milestone in the past year. He originated matters where his firm recovered more than $300 million for clients, reflecting both the scale of cases the firm handles and its capacity to meet complex legal challenges.

The firm's recent success includes two cases for Texas bitcoin mining company Rhodium that demonstrate Stris' approach to high-stakes litigation.

In the first matter, the company faced an existential threat when its landlord — recently acquired by a direct competitor — attempted to force an eviction and locked the company out of its facilities. In re Rhodium Encore LLC, 24-90448 (S.D. Tex., filed Aug. 24, 2024).

"Armed security locked Rhodium out of its facilities and cut off power to thousands of mining machines, threatening to shut the business down overnight," Stris said.

Stris' legal team secured emergency relief within days, ultimately winning a preliminary injunction and proceeding to trial. After a week-long proceeding before U.S. District Judge Alfredo Perez, the court ruled in Rhodium's favor, upholding the company's contracts and rejecting the landlord's claims. The victory enabled Rhodium to sell its assets for $186 million to the same competitor that had attempted the eviction.

Simultaneously, the firm defended Rhodium against a patent infringement lawsuit in the Western District of Texas. Managing Partner Elizabeth Brannen led the defense, successfully excluding the plaintiff's experts through Daubert motions and winning summary judgment of non-infringement. *Midas Green Technologies v. Rhodium Enterprises, Inc.* 6:22-cv-00050 (W.D. Texas, filed Jan. 13, 2022).

These cases illustrate Stris's philosophy that narrative clarity often determines case outcomes. In the eviction matter, he said the opposing side attempted to "flood the record with technical lease disputes, hoping to create enough confusion to justify the eviction." The firm's strategy centered on a simple premise: contracts must be honored.

Stris has positioned his firm at the forefront of artificial intelligence adoption in legal practice. While many law firms have discussed innovation incrementally, he believes the profession now faces transformation.

"The capabilities of AI tools have advanced to a point where they're reshaping how litigation teams analyze records, draft filings, and prepare for trial — not in theory, but in daily practice," Stris said.

The firm uses AI-driven workflows for document review, drafting assistance, and case organization while maintaining focus on strategic decision-making and advocacy. Stris views this technology as an amplifier rather than a replacement for traditional litigation skills.

"We view AI not as a threat to the craft of litigation, but as an amplifier of it," he said.

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Daily Journal's Top 100 Lawyers



Peter K. Stris

Stris & Maher LLP

Los Angeles

Litigation

Peter K. Stris is the founding partner of Stris & Maher LLP, a 20-lawyer litigation boutique specializing in difficult, high-stakes business disputes. Based in Los Angeles, the firm has a nationwide practice, representing clients in trials and appeals before courts throughout America.

Stris' trial-court practice focuses on bet-the-company cases, generally involving damages of $50 million or more. He also has a widely respected appellate practice, which includes having personally argued 10 cases before the United States Supreme Court.

"Unlike our trial-court practice where we represent plaintiffs and defendants in roughly equal parts, our Supreme Court practice is skewed heavily toward representing plaintiffs," Stris said in an interview. "Last year was unusual because our two most significant Supreme Court cases were on the defense side."

In one of those cases, Stris represented a generic drug manufacturer against a big pharma company in a high-stakes patent dispute over a leading drug treatment for multiple sclerosis. *Novartis Pharmaceuticals v. HEC Pharma*, No. 22A272 (U.S. 2023). Novartis was generating over $3 million a day selling its branded version of that drug.

Stris' client persuaded the Federal Circuit to find Novartis' patent invalid. But at the Supreme Court, Novartis—represented by prominent teams from three AmLaw firms—obtained a temporary restraining order from Chief Justice Roberts staying issuance of the Federal Circuit's mandate. That led HEC to hire Stris as its lead Supreme Court counsel. Stris' team submitted a brief in opposition, and Justice Roberts subsequently referred the case to the full court for decision.

In a victory for Stris' client, the court denied Novartis' stay petition and lifted the temporary restraining order, paving the way for HEC to become the first generic to enter the highly lucrative market for fingolimod. Stris later defeated Novartis' petition for certiorari.

"This was a well-deserved victory not only for our client but also for multiple sclerosis sufferers, who now have cheaper and readier access to this life-saving drug," said Stris.

In another closely watched case before the Supreme Court, Mr. Stris and his team preserved a landmark victory for the city of Seattle, overcoming a well-funded legal challenge to the city's guarantee of minimum compensation for low-income hospitality workers. *ERISA Industry Committee v. City of Seattle*, No. 21-1019 (U.S. 2022).

Asked when he decided to become an attorney, Stris replied: "In college, I was studying to compose music for movies. But during my junior year, I won the national debate championship and struggled to fill the seats at my concerts. That's when I realized law school would probably be a better fit for me than Hollywood."

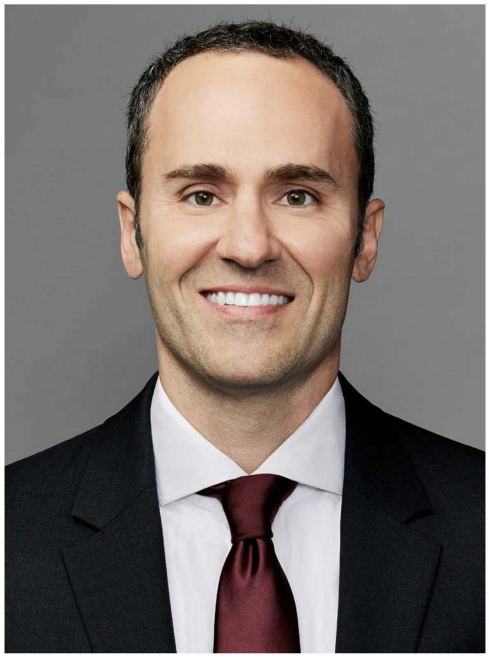
—Douglas Saunders

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Top 100 Lawyers 2022





Top 100 PETER K. STRIS

STRIS & MAHER LLP
LOS ANGELES
APPEALS, ERISA, COMPLEX BUSINESS LITIGATION

Peter K. Stris and his firm are perhaps best known as appellate attorneys. Stris himself has argued 10 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court plus prevailed against petitions for certiorari in several more.

He insists, however, that he and his firm are primarily trial lawyers. "That's the bread and butter," he said.

"We focus on major legal disputes where our firm's involvement can be transformative," Stris said. "We've become known … as the place that you go when there's something unusual and novel about the dispute, and it's going to require the development and execution of a legal strategy."

In what he considers one of his biggest victories, a jury found his client liable for false advertising to a competitor who was seeking as much as $61 million, plus trebling. By the time the case had gone through a jury trial, a court trial, an appeal and a retrial, the plaintiff received just $60,000 plus costs. *Grasshopper House v. Clean & Sober Media*, 2:18-cv-00923 (C.D. Cal., filed Feb. 2, 2018).

The plaintiff ran a high-end rehabilitation treatment center in Malibu, while Stris' client had once owned a competitor but later purchased an online news and review site about the industry. The site published a scathing, one-star review of the plaintiff's facility, prompting the litigation. After the jury's adverse verdict, Stris got the plaintiff's lone damages expert disqualified with a Daubert motion.

"Once there was no more damages expert, there was nothing left to do," he said. "We just didn't come back to court." The judge then excused the jury and held a court trial on the equitable remedy of disgorging profits. In that second trial, Stris was able to put in evidence that the plaintiff also had posted false advertising, so the judge only awarded $60,000.

His firm handles all manner of complex civil litigation, but he has developed real expertise in the very complex area of ERISA. He currently is defending the city of Seattle's special wage law for hotel workers' health care and is hoping the Solicitor General's office will advise the Supreme Court to deny cert. Advocating before the SG's office has "become an important, strategic piece of Supreme Court practice," he said.

And he is handling several appeals challenging identical arbitration provisions that have begun showing up in many pension plans. He argues that the provisions violate a portion of ERISA that allows representative actions. He will argue one such case before the 3rd Circuit in November. *Henry v. Wilmington Trust NA*, 21-2801 (3rd Circ., filed Oct. 1, 2021).

"It's a really important issue," he said.

— *Don DeBenedictis*

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TOP 100 2021

PETER K. STRIS
STRIS & MAHER LLP
LOS ANGELES
APPEALS | LITIGATION

— TOP 100 —



Stris, the lead name partner of the national appellate and complex litigation boutique he founded in 2007, has argued nine cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. He is prepping for his tenth—a copyright infringement case on behalf of the defendant, fast-fashion retailer H&M.

He describes the matter as a battle against a notorious copyright troll that bears many similarities to another copyright case that he won before the Supreme Court in 2019: *Fourth Estate Pub. Benefit Corp. v. Wall-Street.com*.

The new case is *Unicolors Inc. v. H&M Hennes & Mauritz LP*. In the underlying litigation, Unicolors asserted that H&M sold garments that infringed a design for which it had a registered copyright. A jury agreed, but a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel reversed. The panel found that Unicolors knowingly included inaccurate information in its registration application, triggering mandatory referral to the Copyright Office to assess whether those inaccuracies were material.

Unicolors argues that referral to the Copyright Office requires a showing of intent-to-defraud, not merely knowledge of inaccuracies, and it persuaded the Supreme Court to take the case to resolve a circuit split on that issue. *Unicolors Inc. v. H&M Hennes & Mauritz LP*, 20-915 (S. Ct., cert. granted June 1, 2021). H&M's lawyers at Nixon Peabody LLP added Stris to the team to lead the Supreme Court merits briefing and argument.

According to Stris: "The only stakeholders who benefit from the misapplication of a fraud standard are copyright trolls like the plaintiff here." He continued: "Make no mistake. Their business model is to register copyrights on thousands of designs through improper applications. Those registrations are then used to extract settlements through hundreds of questionable lawsuits and thousands of baseless demand letters. We're confident the court will reject this attempt to misread and misuse the Copyright Act."

Stris is also awaiting a decision on a possible 11th Supreme Court showdown, this one in a massive environmental lawsuit. He represents Florida and Utah counties who sued Volkswagen, under state law, for recalling sold vehicles and installing illegal emissions-cheating software. Volkswagen convinced the trial court to dismiss the lawsuits as impliedly preempted by the Clean Air Act.

Stris persuaded the 9th Circuit to reverse. Volkswagen has asked the Supreme Court to review that ruling, which, the carmaker contends, could expose it to more than $11 billion in claims annually. *Volkswagen Group of America Inc. v. Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County, Florida*, 20-994 (S. Ct., cert. petition filed Jan. 21, 2021).

"We think Volkswagen's petition should be denied. But if the Supreme Court takes the case, I'm cautiously optimistic that our clients will prevail again," Stris said.

"Business is good," he added. But meanwhile, his immediate focus in early August was on family matters. "My wife and I have a little girl coming this month. My son is 12, so it's been a long time since I changed a diaper." Fortunately, he has no arguments scheduled for a couple of months.

— John Roemer

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TOP 100 2020

CIVIL LITIGATION

Peter K. Stris



STRIS & MAHER LLP
LOS ANGELES

SPECIALTY: COMPLEX BUSINESS LITIGATION AND APPEALS

Stris represents clients in complex business cases. In his ninth argument before the U.S. Supreme Court, he prevailed 9-0 last year for client Wall-Street.com, a small company later sold to The Motley Fool.

In the Copyright Act question at issue, the justices agreed with Stris' position that a copyright infringement suit cannot be filed until the copyright has been successfully registered by the U.S. Copyright Office. *Fourth Estate Public Benefit Corp. v. Wall-Street.com*, 17-571 (SCOTUS, op. issued March 4, 2019).

"It was an IP case, and that's a lot of what we do here," Stris said of his firm's practice. "So to get to do IP before the Supreme Court and also to be on the defense side was a lot of fun." He explained that he usually finds himself arguing for the plaintiff at the high court. "It's more relaxing to be on the defense side before a business-oriented court. Also, we were pretty confident we were right."

The challenge was to overcome policy arguments endorsed by several circuit courts and treatise authors and persuade the justices that copyright owners have to wait to sue until registration is official. The question arose when Fourth Estate alleged Wall-Street.com infringed its copyrights in news articles by displaying them after its subscription had expired. Fourth Estate submitted a registration application to the Copyright Office, but sued before it had been processed. Lower courts dismissed the suit and Fourth Estate petitioned for high court review.

In an ongoing case, Stris represents a wealthy couple in a suit claiming that Fidelity Investments Inc.'s charitable fund badly mishandled a $100 million donation. So far he's fought off a motion to dismiss and secured denial of summary judgment and won most of his own motion for summary judgment on Fidelity's affirmative defenses. Trial was set for April 2020 but has now been rescheduled for October. *Fairbairn v. Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund*, 3:18-cv-04881 (N.D. Cal., filed Aug. 10, 2018).

"The pandemic affected this case because we were set for a jury trial but post-Covid we agreed to do a bench trial remotely," Stris said. "Our clients are immunocompromised with Lyme disease. In fact, that's partly what their gift was for, to fund Lyme research. So they couldn't travel to court with the virus raging."

Stris said part of their gift was in stock, which Fidelity's money managers sold all at once, causing its value to plummet. "That was totally botched, it looked like fire sale selling. Clear negligence. We want to hold charities responsible in this path-breaking case."

—John Roemer

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