



## DEAN P. LAING

# O'NEILCANNON

HOLLMAN DEJONG & LAING S.C.

Shareholder

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Dean P. Laing has been with O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing S.C., a 50-plus attorney law firm headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for over 42 years since graduating *cum laude* from Marquette University Law School in 1983. He was on the firm's Board of Directors from 1990 to 2023, and was the firm's President from 2015 to 2020.

### PRACTICE GROUP

- Litigation

Mr. Laing has repeatedly been recognized by members of the bar as one of Wisconsin's top trial attorneys. Throughout his legal career, in which he represents companies, individuals, judges, and attorneys, he has received numerous recognitions, including the following:

- He was rated the #2 attorney in Wisconsin out of over 15,000 attorneys in 2019 by *Super Lawyers*.
- He was selected as the "Lawyer of the Year" in 2019 by the *Milwaukee Bar Association*, which described him as "one of Wisconsin's top trial attorneys."
- He was selected three times as the "Lawyer of the Year" in Wisconsin by *The Best Lawyers in America*, "the oldest and most respected peer-review publication in the legal profession." In 2012 he was selected as the "Personal Injury Litigator Lawyer of the Year," in 2016 he was selected as the "Product Liability Litigation-Defendants Lawyer of the Year," and in 2019 he was once again selected as the "Product Liability Litigation-Defendants Lawyer of the Year." He is believed to be the only attorney in Wisconsin to receive "Lawyer of the Year" for his accomplishments as both a plaintiff's attorney and a defense attorney.
- He was selected in 2012 and 2016-present as one of the "Top 10 Lawyers" in Wisconsin by *Super Lawyers*. *Super Lawyers* surveys all attorneys and judges in Wisconsin and, based on the results of that survey and other independent research, selects the top 10 attorneys in Wisconsin, regardless of area of practice.
- He was selected in 2006-present as one of the "Top 50 Lawyers" in Wisconsin by *Super Lawyers*. He is one of only two attorneys out of over 15,000 attorneys in Wisconsin, and the only commercial litigator in Wisconsin, to make the list all 20 years. The honor is given to the 50 Wisconsin attorneys receiving the highest point totals in the statewide balloting, research, and blue-ribbon peer review process, regardless of area of practice.
- He was profiled as the Cover Story of the 2014 *Wisconsin Super Lawyers* annual magazine.
- He was selected as one of the "Top 25 Lawyers" in the Milwaukee area by *Super Lawyers* each year since it began publishing the list (2011-present). The honor is given to the 25 Milwaukee area attorneys receiving the highest point totals in the statewide balloting, research, and blue-ribbon peer review process, regardless of area of practice.

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- He was selected as a Benchmark Litigator Star by Benchmark Litigation, which describes itself as the “definitive guide to the world’s leading litigation firms and lawyers.”
- He was selected as one of "Milwaukee's Best Lawyers" by *Milwaukee Magazine* (June 1990), after being in practice for only seven years. The magazine called Mr. Laing "a brilliant, hard-working attorney who has an impressive record and is a guaranteed star in the immediate future. He's streetwise and he's bright and that's tough to get both."
- He was selected as one of "Milwaukee's Best Lawyers" by *Milwaukee Magazine* (Feb. 1995). The magazine stated that Mr. Laing is "very bright, hardworking and intense -- no one will outwork him."
- He was selected as a recipient of the 2005 "Leader in the Law Award" (its second year in existence) presented by the *Wisconsin Law Journal*, the statewide weekly newspaper for Wisconsin attorneys and judges. The award is given annually to 10-20 Wisconsin attorneys and judges "whose efforts represent some of the best from our legal community."
- He is listed in three categories in *The Best Lawyers in America* based on a "peer-review survey comprising more than 2.5 million confidential evaluations by the top attorneys in the country:" Commercial Litigation, Personal Injury Litigation–Plaintiffs, and Product Liability Litigation–Defendants.
- He was selected as one of “America’s Top 100 High Stakes Litigators” (2018), an invitation-only organization consisting of “the nation’s most exceptional trial lawyers for high stakes legal matters.”
- He was selected as a founding Lifetime Achievement member of “America’s Top 100 Bet-The-Company Litigators” (2019), an invitation only organization consisting of the nation’s “best and most effective” litigators.
- He was selected as a founding Lifetime Achievement member of “America’s Top 100 Attorneys” (2016), an invitation only organization consisting of the “nation’s most exceptional attorneys.” The organization called him one of Wisconsin’s “most esteemed attorneys.”
- He was selected as a "Top 100 Trial Lawyer" by The National Trial Lawyers: Top 100 (2013), an invitation-only organization in which "membership is extended solely to the select few of the most qualified [trial] attorneys from each state who demonstrate superior qualifications of leadership, reputation, influence, stature and public profile."
- He was selected as one of the "Top 10 Attorneys" in Wisconsin by the National Academy of Personal Injury Attorneys (2013), which selects the "best of the best" personal injury attorneys in each state by use of a "meticulous, independent selection process [to] resolve the challenge of attorneys claiming to be the best without basis for such a claim, leaving no doubt as to whom the preeminent personal injury attorneys are in each state."
- He was selected as a Member of “The Nation’s Top One Percent” by the National Association of Distinguished Counsel (2015), whose roster “consists of the leading legends of the legal profession.”

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- He was selected as one of “Americas Most Honored Professionals–Top 1%” (2016) by American Registry. The award is given to the top 1% of all professionals based upon “repeated, publicized honors from the press, peers, trade groups and clients over a five year period.”
- He was selected as one of the “Top 100 Trial Lawyers” in Wisconsin by The National Trial Lawyers (2007–19) for his “superior qualifications, trial results, leadership, influence, reputation, stature, and profile in the trial attorney community.”
- He was selected as one of *Lawdragon 3000 Leading Plaintiffs’ Lawyers in America* (2007–19). The publication lists the “best lawyers nationwide” who are “noted for getting the best results and their leadership of the plaintiffs’ bar.” A total of 11 Wisconsin attorneys made the initial list.
- He was elected a Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America (2010), an “invitation only trial lawyer honorary society” based upon “effectiveness and accomplishment in litigation, both at the trial and appellate levels, and superior ethical reputation.”
- He is a Life Fellow of the Wisconsin Law Foundation (2016), which is limited to 2.5% of the State Bar’s total members and “honor[s] members of the State Bar of Wisconsin who have both achieved significant accomplishments in their career and contributed leadership and service to their communities.”
- He was elected a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation (2016), an “honorary organization of lawyers, judges and legal scholars whose public and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the welfare of their communities and to the highest principles of the legal profession.”
- He was selected as a “Leading Lawyer” by *MKE Lifestyle Magazine* (formerly *M Magazine*) (2012–19), which lists “Milwaukee’s highest-ranked attorneys” based on a “proprietary algorithm [used by Avvo which] rates all lawyers on a 10-point scale, factoring in peer endorsements as well as experience, education, training, speaking, publishing, and awards.”
- He has an AV Preeminent 5.0 out of 5.0 rating by Martindale-Hubbell, which is the highest rating possible and “a testament to the fact that a lawyer’s peers rank him or her at the highest level of professional excellence.”
- He has a 10.0 out of 10.0 rating by Avvo, a national attorney rating service which uses a mathematical model to rate attorneys based on experience, professional achievements, industry recognition, and professional conduct.

Judges have likewise recognized Mr. Laing’s accomplishments, stating:

- The Honorable Kitty K. Brennan, then a trial court judge and now a retired judge of the Wisconsin Court of Appeals, said that Mr. Laing is an attorney “of the highest standing in [his] profession” and one of the “best . . . lawyers I’ve ever seen” in a Decision issued on April 15, 2005 in *Southeast Wisconsin Professional Baseball Park District v. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America, Inc.*, Milwaukee County Case No. 02-CV-60.
- The Honorable Paul R. Van Grunsven, a trial court judge in Milwaukee County, said that Mr. Laing is one “of the best lawyers in town or in the state” in a hearing held on April 5, 2021 in *In re the Estate of Kathleen D’Acquisto*, Milwaukee County Case No. 15-PR-1971.

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- The late Honorable Rudolph T. Randa, then a judge with the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, said that Mr. Laing is "an aggressive and indisputabl[y] qualified independent counsel" in a Decision issued on September 27, 2001 in *Marshall & Ilsley Trust Co. v. Leslie*, E.D. Wis. Case No. 97-C-427.

Among numerous high-profile cases in which he has been involved, Mr. Laing was the lead trial attorney for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America, Inc. in a lawsuit relating to the construction of the retractable roof of Miller Park (the home of the Milwaukee Brewers), which Judge Kitty K. Brennan called "the biggest case [Milwaukee] County has ever seen." The case, filed by the Southeast Wisconsin Professional Baseball Park District, sought \$50 million in damages from Mitsubishi for alleged defects in the retractable roof constructed by Mitsubishi. Mitsubishi denied liability and filed a counterclaim seeking additional costs incurred in constructing the roof due to material changes made to the roof's design after Mitsubishi bid the job. The case involved claims of \$140 million, and generated the taking of 162 depositions in three countries, the production of 2.9 million pages of documents, the filing of 96 substantive motions, and several trips to the appellate court. After three days of mediation involving 22 attorneys from seven states, a settlement was reached one week before the scheduled trial, resulting in Mitsubishi paying nothing on the Baseball Park District's claims and receiving \$18 million on its counterclaim. The lead attorney for the Baseball Park District was John H. Hinderaker of Minneapolis.

In another example of a high-profile case handled by Mr. Laing, he represented a bank being sued by Koss Corporation in connection with an embezzlement by one of Koss's employees, Sujata Sachdeva, who obtained \$17 million of the embezzled funds from Koss's accounts at the bank. Ms. Sachdeva embezzled a total of \$34 million from Koss, which is the ninth largest embezzlement in U.S. history. Koss sought \$42 million in damages from the bank, alleging that the bank acted in bad faith under the Uniform Fiduciaries Act by failing to detect the embezzlement. After more than five years of litigation, Koss's case was dismissed by the trial court on summary judgment, which ruling was subsequently affirmed by the Wisconsin Court of Appeals and later affirmed by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The bank paid nothing on Koss's claims. The lead attorney for Koss was Michael J. Avenatti of California.

During his legal career, Mr. Laing has obtained more than 30 million-dollar-plus jury verdicts or settlements for his clients, including the following:

\$24.7 million (medical malpractice) (co-counsel)  
\$18.0 million (construction)  
\$5.6 million (legal malpractice)  
\$5.4 million (corporate fraud)  
\$5.3 million (breach of contract)  
\$5.1 million (breach of contract)  
\$3.5 million (insurance coverage)  
\$3.1 million (medical malpractice)  
\$3.0 million (school bus accident)  
\$2.7 million (golf cart accident)  
\$2.6 million (auto accident)

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\$2.6 million (insurance)  
\$2.2 million (forklift accident)  
\$2.1 million (breach of contract)  
\$2.0 million (Americans with Disabilities Act)  
\$1.8 million (shareholder oppression)  
\$1.7 million (product liability)  
\$1.7 million (motorcycle accident)  
\$1.6 million (breach of contract)  
\$1.5 million (medical malpractice)  
\$1.4 million (medical malpractice) (co-counsel)  
\$1.3 million (insurance coverage)  
\$1.3 million (breach of contract)  
\$1.2 million (truck accident)  
\$1.2 million (motorcycle accident)  
\$1.1 million (breach of contract)  
\$1.1 million (prepayment penalty)  
\$1.1 million (auto accident)  
\$1.1 million (motorcycle accident)  
\$1.0 million (truck accident)  
\$1.0 million (bus accident)  
\$1.0 million (motorcycle accident)

Mr. Laing is board certified in Civil Trial Advocacy and Civil Pretrial Practice Advocacy by the National Board of Trial Advocacy, and is a frequent author and speaker on legal issues involving evidence, torts, insurance, and trial tactics. He has authored 42 journal articles and book chapters, including the Evidence Chapter of the Wisconsin State Bar's annual book entitled *Annual Survey of Wisconsin Law* each year (but two) from 1987 to 2016; been an invited speaker at 34 legal seminars/workshops; and been counsel in over 75 published/reported decisions, some of which made new law.

Mr. Laing's personality and trial skills have allowed him to be one of a select few attorneys who have been able to successfully practice both commercial litigation and personal injury litigation. In addition to representing Fortune 500 and other variously sized companies in their commercial litigation needs, Mr. Laing represents severely injured persons in prosecuting their personal injury claims. His passion for those cases is partially derived from his having two brothers with cerebral palsy. As a result of growing up in that environment, Mr. Laing understands what families go through in caring for loved ones with special needs, and is able to communicate that to insurance companies, defense counsel, judges, and juries.

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