



Thomas M. Christ

PARTNER

tchrist@sussmanshank.com

O: 503.243.1661 x 280

My Assistant

Joanna M. Bolstad 503.243.1661 x243

Tom is primarily an appellate attorney, although he often appears in trial courts in matters that involve legal issues and are likely to be resolved by briefing and argument rather than the presentation of witnesses and evidence. During his career, he has handled over 400 appeals in various appellate courts, including the Oregon Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, the Washington Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, and the United States Court of Appeals. He also argued one case in the United States Supreme Court (*Vernonia Sch. Dist. 4J v. Acton*).

Tom usually represents defendants in civil cases, often on behalf of their insurers, and sometimes represents the insurers themselves. But a large part of his practice, maybe a quarter of it, is pro bono, representing nonprofit organizations or their members in constitutional, environmental cases, and land-use cases.

In 1991, Tom's eighth year of practice, the Supreme Court appointed him to serve as a pro tem judge in the Multnomah County Circuit Court. The court re-appointed him every three years thereafter, each time after a favorable review by the local bar's judicial-screening committee. He sits at least one day each month, hearing motions in civil cases, usually motions for summary judgment. Listening to the arguments of other lawyers, seeing what works and what doesn't, improves his own arguments, when he's on the other side of the bench.

Industries

Railroad

Practices

Litigation

Education

B.S., University of Oregon
Economics

J.D., University of Oregon School of
Law

Admissions

- Oregon State Bar
- United States Supreme Court
- United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
- United States District Court for the District of Oregon

Honors

- Best Lawyers in America® Appellate, Insurance Law, Litigation – First Amendment law (1999 – 2025)
- Best Lawyers in America® “Lawyer of the Year” Portland, OR for Appellate practice (2011 and

THE ADVANTAGE OF WORKING WITH ME

Clients facing litigation want to know whether they will win, yes or no. And I strive to tell them in words of one syllable. Sometimes, of course, the law is not that clear; that's what makes cases. But clients aren't helped in making hard decisions by advice that begins "on the one hand." So I try not ever to hedge or qualify or demur. And I've usually found that you don't have to, if only you dig a little deeper into the law or think a little harder about the issues.

REPRESENTATIVE WORK

- I am currently representing WaterWatch, an Oregon nonprofit that works to keep water in rivers and streams for fish, wildlife, and recreation. My client prevented an irrigation district from damming a creek that provides habitat for wild cutthroat trout.
- I recently won an appeal in federal court for two insurers of a car dealership in a dispute about coverage for an accident caused by an employee driving on his way home from the office holiday party.
- Not long ago I represented an Indian tribe that was denied the right to display an ad on the sides of public buses and trains because it was deemed "too political," and an environmental organization that was denied the right to display a "non-commercial" ad in the Portland Airport. In both cases, I persuaded the Oregon Court of Appeals that the free-speech clause in the Oregon Constitution prevents the government from discriminating among advertisers based on the content of their messages. The government doesn't have to allow advertising on its property, but if it allows any ads, it must take all comers.

CASES

Oregon Supreme Court

[Hickey v. Scott](#) (2022)

[State ex rel Kristof v. Fagan](#) (2022)

[WaterWatch of Oregon v. Water Resources Dept.](#) (2021)

[Wright v. Turner](#) (2021)

[Allianz Global Risks v. ACE Property & Casualty Ins. Co.](#) (2021)

[McLaughlin v. Wilson](#) (2019)

[Foote v. State of Oregon](#) (2019)

2019), Insurance Law (2013), and Litigation – First Amendment law (2016, 2024)

- Oregon Super Lawyers® (2006 – 2024)
- Oregon Super Lawyers® Top 50 List (2019, 2020)
- Lifetime Award, ACLU of Oregon (2016)
- Award of Merit, Multnomah County Bar Association (2006)



[Coos Waterkeeper v. Port of Coos Bay](#) (2018)

[Health Net, Inc. v. Dept. of Revenue](#) (2018)

[Dowell v. Oregon Mutual Ins. Co.](#) (2017)

[West Hills Dev. Co. v. Chartis Claims](#) (2016)

[MT M Gaming v. City of Portland](#) (2016)

[FountainCourt Homeowners v. FountainCourt Development](#) (2016)

[Turner v. State of Oregon](#) (2016)

[Deckard v. Bunch](#) (2016)

[Broadway Cab LLC v. Employment Dept.](#) (2015)

[Montara Owners Assn. v. La Noue Dev. LLC.](#) (2015)

[Noble v. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife](#) (2014)

[Two Two v. Fujitec America, Inc.](#) (2014)

[Karuk Tribe of California v. TriMet](#) (2014)

[Wright v. Turner](#) (2014)

[Brandup v. RconTrust Co.](#) (2013)

[Assoc. of Unit Owners of Timbercrest Condos. V. Warren](#) (2012)

[Eads v. Borman](#) (2012)

[Farmers Ins. Co. V. Mowry](#) (2011)

[Strawn v. Farmers Ins. Co.](#) (2011)

[Bonds v. Farmers Ins. Co.](#) (2010)

[Colby v. Gunson](#) (2010)

[Charles v. Palamo](#) (2010)

[Vogelin v. American Family Ins. Co.](#) (2009)

[Vaughn v. First Transit, Inc.](#) (2009)

[Harris v. Suniga](#) (2008)

[Mid-Century Ins. Co. v. Perkins](#) (2008)

Oregon Court of Appeals

[Rodriguez v. Union Pacific Railroad Co](#) (2022)

[Thoens v. Safeco Ins. Co.](#) (2022)

[Berger v. Safeco Ins. Co.](#) (2020)

[Wood v. Taylor](#) (2020)

[Rogowski v. Safeco Ins. Co.](#) (2020)

[Wright v. Turner](#) (2020)

[Anantha v. Clarno](#) (2020)

[Allianz Global Risks v. Ace Prop. and Cas. Ins. Co.](#) (2019)



[Patton v. Mutual of Enumclaw Ins. Co.](#) (2019)
[Reetz v. Johanson](#) (2019)
[Epps v. Farmers Ins. Exch.](#) (2018)
[McLaughlin v. Wilson](#) (2018)
[Wilda v. Roe](#) (2018)
[PIH Beaverton LLC v. Red Sheild Ins. Co.](#) (2018)
[Sec. Nat'l Ins. Co. v. Sunset Presbyterian Church](#) (2017)
[Cooksley v. Lofland](#) (2017)
[Certain Underwriters at Lloyd's London v. Mass. Bonding and Ins. Co.](#) (2017)
[Oregon Wild v. Port of Portland](#) (2017)
[Marandas Family Trust v. Pauley](#) (2017)
[Alsaedi v. Conroy](#) (2017)
[Higgins v. State Farm Fire & Casualty Co.](#) (2017)
[McClain v. Safeco Ins. Co.](#) (2017)
[West Hills Dev.Co. v. Chartis Claims](#) (2017)
[Village at North Pointe Condo. Assn. Bloedel Constr.](#) (2016)
[Hoddenpyl v. Fiskum](#) (2016)
[Stonecrest Properties, LLC v. City of Eugene](#) (2016)
[LDS Development, LLC v. City of Eugene](#) (2016)
[Market Transport, LTD v. Employment Dept.](#) (2016)
[Wingett v. Silbernagel](#) (2016)
[Village at North Pointe Condo. Assn. Bloedel Constr.](#) (2016)
[Thoens v. Safeco Ins. Co.](#) (2015)
[De Zafra v. Farmers Ins. Co.](#) (2015)
[Sunset Presbyterian Church v. Andersen Constr.](#) (2014)
[Patton v. Mutual of Enumclaw](#) (2014)
[Heller v. BNSF Ry. Co.](#) (2014)
[Howard v. BNSF Ry. Co.](#) (2014)
[Congdon v. Berg](#) (2013)
[Truck Ins. Co. v. Friend](#) (2013)

ORGANIZATIONS

Professional Organizations

- Member of the invitation-only American Academy of Appellate Lawyers, with just 11 members in Oregon and 300 nationwide
- Member, Oregon Association of Defense Counsel
- Past member of American Bar Association House of Delegates, and current member of Oregon State Bar House of Delegates

Community Organizations

- Member, Planning Commission for the City of Manzanita, Oregon (2023)
- Member, Oregon Public Defenders Services Commission, the state agency providing counsel for indigent defendants (2016 - 2022)

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Soccer consumes much of my spare time -- both watching and playing. I also like to fly-fish for trout, mostly because I love the environs where trout are found, and truth be told, I don't really bother them that much. I read a lot, too, usually nonfiction. Any subject will do, so long as the author's writing is good and will, by example, help improve my own writing. I also enjoy traveling with my wife to a favorite spot on the Oregon coast, or to visit our daughters in California.