



John M. Challis

St. Louis
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Areas of Practice

- Fiduciary Litigation
- Probate and Trust Administration
- Guardianships and Conservatorships
- Alternative Dispute Resolution

Education

- Saint Louis University
School of Law
J.D., *magna cum laude*, 2004
Alpha Sigma Nu Jesuit Honor Society
Order of the Woolsack
Managing Editor, Saint Louis University Public Law Review
Dean's List
Academic Excellence Award:
 - Constitutional Law
 - Legal Profession
 - Jurisprudence
- Truman State University
B.S., Biology, 2000

Bar Admissions

- Missouri
- Illinois

Experience

John Challis is the Managing Partner at Kembell Woods & Martinsen, where he advocates for individuals and businesses in a wide range of contested matters. With a focus on fiduciary litigation and administration, John is recognized for delivering outstanding results for his clients through negotiation, mediation, and litigation.

He counsels clients on fiduciary relationships, disputed administration, will and trust contests, and asset transfer disputes, drawing on substantial trial and appellate experience in Missouri courts. Understanding that the best resolution is not always found at trial, John is highly trained in alternative dispute resolution. He meets all requirements under Rule 17 to serve as a mediator or arbitrator and frequently mediates trust and estate disputes.

John is a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, the Litigation Counsel of America, and The American Bar Foundation. He currently serves as Chair of the Probate and Trust Division of The Missouri Bar and is distinguished as a "Band One" attorney for Private Wealth Disputes by *Chambers*. His accolades also include "Lawyer of the Year" by *Best Lawyers* for Trust & Estates Litigation and a "Top 10 Lawyer" recognition in Missouri and Kansas by *SuperLawyers*.

An active thought leader, John regularly writes and speaks on fiduciary topics, including keynote presentations at national conferences on fiduciary litigation, estate and trust administration, and ethics topics.

Distinctions

- Fellow, American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC)
- Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America
- Fellow, American Bar Foundation
- Ranked in "Band One" for Private Wealth Disputes by *Chambers*, 2021-2025
- Awarded the "Lawyer of the Year" by *Best Lawyers* for Litigation - Trusts and Estates in St. Louis, 2018, 2020, 2024, 2026
- Named a Top 10 Attorney in Missouri and Kansas by *Super Lawyers*, 2025
- Named a Top 100 Attorney in Missouri and Kansas by *Super Lawyers*, 2020-2025
- Named a Top 50 Attorney in St. Louis by *Super Lawyers*, 2019-2025
- Included on the "Under 40 Hot List" by *Benchmark Litigation*, multiple years
- W. Oliver Rasch Award Winner, The Missouri Bar, 2020

- Chosen as a "Future Star" by *Benchmark Litigation*, multiple years
- Recognized by *Best Lawyers* from 2012-2026 in the following fields:
 - Commercial Litigation
 - Litigation - Trusts and Estates
 - Trusts and Estates
- Selected for inclusion in *Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers*, 2011-2025

Affiliations

- American College of Trust and Estate Counsel
 - Chair, Communications Committee
 - ACTEC/ALI CLE Coordinator
 - Missouri Membership Coordinator
 - Member, Fiduciary Litigation Committee
 - Member, State Laws Committee
 - Member, Program Committee
- The Missouri Bar
 - Chair, Probate & Trust Division
 - Past Chair, Fiduciary Litigation Committee
 - Past Chair, Electronic Wills Subcommittee
 - Member, Annual Meeting Planning Committee
 - Member, Government Relations Committee
- Litigation Counsel of America
 - Barrister, Order of Veritas
 - Advocate, Order of Certus
 - Member, Trial Law Institute
 - Member, Diversity Law Institute
- Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis
- Estate Planning Council of St. Louis
- St. Louis County Bar Association

Publications & Presentations

- "*Can You Sleep at Night? Ethical Landmines in Estates and Trusts*" The Missouri Bar, 2025 Annual Meeting
- "*Burdens and Presumptions: Litigation of a Will & Trust Contest*" St. Louis County Bar Association, 2025 Probate Law Conference
- "*The Lifecycle of a Client from Engagement to Termination: Common Ethical Issues and Pitfalls for the Trusts and Estates Practitioner*" Nebraska State Bar Association, 2025 Advanced Estate Planning Institute
- "*Litigating Claims for Breach of Trust Under the Uniform Trust Code*" ACTEC/ALI Webinar, 2024

"Litigating Claims for Breach of Trust" ACTEC, 2024 Heart of America Institute and Regional Meeting

"The Subtle Art of Setting Boundaries" The Missouri Bar, 2022 Estate, Trust, and Elder Law Institute

"We've Only Just Begun: Starting off Estate Administration on the Right Foot" ACTEC, Summer 2022 Meeting Standalone CLE Program

"Who Owns the File?" The Missouri Bar, 2022 Annual Meeting

"Getting Paid the Right Way: Ethical Issues Related to Attorneys' Fees Under Missouri Law" The Missouri Bar, 2021 ETEL Institute

"Don't Forget About the House: Actions to Set Aside Nonprobate Transfers" Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, 2021 Fiduciary Litigation Conference

"Getting Paid the Right Way: Ethical Issues Related to Attorneys' Fees" ACTEC, 2021 Heart of America Institute

"No-Contest Clauses: Traps for the Unwary" The Missouri Bar, 2020 Estate, Trust, and Elder Law Institute

"[Electronic Wills in Missouri: The Future is Now](#)" *Journal of The Missouri Bar*, Vol. 75, No. 6 / November-December 2019.

"Estate Planning v. Elder Law: What's in Your Durable Power of Attorney?" The Missouri Bar, 2019 Estate, Trust, and Elder Law Institute

"Annual Law Update on Trusts and Estates" The Missouri Bar, 2019-2021 Annual Law Update

"Trusts on Trial: Tips and Traps in Fiduciary Litigation" ACTEC, 2018 Missouri-Kansas Meeting

"Strategic Point/Counterpoint on Trust Administration and Litigation" The Missouri Bar, 2018 Annual Meeting

"Issues Involved in Challenging and Defending the Estate Plan" St. Louis County Bar Association, 2016 Probate Law Conference

"The Lifecycle of Powers of Attorney for the Planner and the Litigator" The Missouri Bar, 2015 Estate, Trust, and Elder Law Institute

"Understanding Key Issues in Fiduciary Litigation" The Missouri Bar, 2014 Annual Meeting

"The Best and Worst Ways that Fiduciaries Can Handle Beneficiaries" Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, 2012 Fiduciary Litigation Conference

"Undoing the Written Word: Pitfalls in Will and Trust Contests" Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, 2011 Fiduciary Litigation Conference

"Damages in Fiduciary Litigation: How to Calculate and Efficiently Present" Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, 2010 Fiduciary Litigation Conference