

Steven F. Pflaum

Partner | Litigation & Disputes

OVERVIEW

Steve is a partner in the firm's Litigation Department, where he represents clients in complex civil litigation matters before state and federal courts throughout the country. He has considerable experience with commercial disputes, constitutional challenges, statutory interpretation issues, and defamation and invasion of privacy suits. He is skilled at representing municipalities in cases involving so-called "locally undesirable land uses" such as airports, music amphitheatres, jails, or landfills. A past President of the Illinois Appellate Lawyers Association and a Fellow of the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers, he regularly handles state and federal appeals involving a broad range of civil and criminal issues, often serving as lead appellate counsel or consulting counsel following an unfavorable result in a lower trial or appellate court.

Steve devotes a significant portion of his practice to representing not-for-profit hospitals in property and sales tax exemption controversies. He assisted with the drafting of 2012 legislation covering this unique area of law and has argued two appeals before the Illinois Supreme Court regarding that legislation, including one on behalf of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association that produced a unanimous ruling upholding the legislation's constitutionality. His unique, and uniquely extensive, experience litigating hospital exemption issues, counseling hospitals and their affiliates in preparing property and sales tax exemption applications, and guiding hospital-related entities in contested proceedings before the Illinois Department of Revenue enables him to develop comprehensive, long-term strategies that enable his clients to minimize their tax liability and thereby devote more resources to their charitable purposes.



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EDUCATION

University of Michigan Law School
(J.D., 1979) *magna cum laude*

University of Illinois at Urbana-
Champaign (B.A., Phi Beta Kappa,
1976)

ADMISSIONS

Illinois

California

Steve is a founding member and current chair of the Illinois Judicial Ethics Committee, a former member and two-term chair of the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility, and a former outside General Counsel of The Chicago Bar Association. Although primarily intended as a form of public service, Steve's involvement with professional ethics and liability issues has increasingly led to his retention by lawyers and law firms as an expert witness or as counsel regarding those issues.

Steve was recently appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court to chair the Court's Statutory Court Fee Task Force, a group of judges, legislators, and lawyers tasked with recommending improvements to the 2019 legislation overhauling the imposition of court costs and fees in civil, traffic, and criminal cases. That legislation was the product of recommendations by the legislatively created Statutory Court Fees Task Force, which Steve also chaired.

Clients rely on Steve to assemble and lead litigation teams in high-stakes or potentially precedent-setting situations. They appreciate his hands-on approach, which often includes major drafting responsibility for important briefs, as well as the care with which he develops nuanced, often multipronged strategies for pursuing his client's objectives.

Steve is the past chair of the firm's Pro Bono Committee, through which he collaborated with the members of the Committee and lawyers throughout the firm to implement the firm's innovative and ambitious pro bono policy. Steve was one of seven NGE attorneys to receive the 2023 Award for Excellence in Pro Bono Service from the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

EXPERIENCE

- Guided Illinois Health and Hospital Association in intervening in litigation challenging the constitutionality of Illinois' hospital property tax exemption legislation, and obtained rulings upholding the constitutionality of that legislation in the trial court, the Illinois Appellate Court, and the Illinois Supreme Court
- Successfully represented pork producer in landmark Illinois Supreme Court decision regarding land use regulations applicable to so-called "mega-hog farms"
- Drafted municipal noise ordinance intended to control noise from outdoor music amphitheater and successfully defended ordinance at trial and on appeal in ensuing federal court constitutional challenge
- Served as lead counsel for a not-for-profit hospital in a case of first impression in which the Illinois Appellate Court upheld the hospital's right to seek a judicial determination regarding its entitlement to property tax exemptions without first seeking exemptions from the Illinois Department of Revenue

- Obtained dismissal of multiple lawsuits across the United States, including putative class actions, against candy manufacturer arising out of advertising promotion, and successfully defended the dismissals in those cases that were appealed
- Obtained jury verdict in “bet-the-company” case against manufacturer accused of copyright infringement and Lanham Act violations
- Obtained dismissal of numerous lawsuits against media defendants for defamation and/or false light invasion of privacy, and successfully defended the dismissals on appeal
- Prepared *amicus curiae* briefs in various federal and state appellate courts, including United States and Illinois Supreme Courts, on behalf of corporations, associations, and other clients
- Received rare appointments by Illinois Supreme Court to represent clients in (1) an appeal addressing the application of *Miranda v. Arizona* to interrogation of an inmate, and (2) an original *habeas corpus* and *mandamus* proceeding in the Supreme Court raising constitutional issues concerning the defendant’s sentence
- Co-author with NGE colleagues Tonya G. Newman and Collette A. Woghiren of the chapter regarding property tax and sales tax exemptions in the treatise, *The Law of Medical Practice in Illinois* (2021 ed.)
- Represented the Illinois Health Association in the *Oswald v. Hamer* litigation upholding the facial constitutionality of Section 15-86

RECOGNITIONS

- Chicago Bar Association/Chicago Bar Foundation Justice John Paul Stevens Award, 2022
- *The Best Lawyers in America 2023*, “Lawyer of the Year,” Litigation – Regulatory Enforcement (SEC, Telecom, Energy)
- Award for Excellence in Pro Bono Service, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, 2023
- Chicago Bar Association/Chicago Bar Foundation Edward J. Lewis II Pro Bono Service Award, 2019
- Illinois Judges Association *Amicus* Award, 2018, for distinguished service to the judiciary on the Illinois Judicial Ethics Committee from 1992 to the present
- *Chambers USA: America’s Leading Lawyers for Business*, recommended in “Litigation – General Commercial”
- *The Best Lawyers in America*, recommended in “Chicago Litigation – Regulatory Enforcement (SEC, Telecom, Energy)” since 2011 (Lawyer of the Year, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2025)



- *Illinois Super Lawyers*, recommended in "Business Litigation" since 2005

NEWS & INSIGHTS

June 5, 2025 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Secures Rankings for Eight Practice Groups and 22 Attorneys in *Chambers USA* 2025

January 24, 2025 Firm News

Twenty-Two Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Recognized on 2025 Illinois Super Lawyers List

August 15, 2024 Firm News

60 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2025 *Best Lawyers In America*

July 2, 2024 In The Media

Steve Pflaum Mentioned in June 2024 Issue of *Illinois Courts Connect*

June 6, 2024 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Secures Nine Ranked Practice Groups and 23 Recognized Attorneys in *Chambers USA* 2024

January 29, 2024 Firm News

Thirty-One Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Recognized on 2024 Illinois Super Lawyers List

November 14, 2023 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Offers Key Insights on Judicial Ethics in Recent *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* Article

August 17, 2023 Firm News

55 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2024 *Best Lawyers In America*

June 1, 2023 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Secures 10 Ranked Practice Groups and 25 Recognized Attorneys in *Chambers USA* 2023

May 18, 2023 Firm News

NGE Receives Community Partner Honor from Center for Advancing Domestic Peace

05.05.23 Firm News

Seven Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Recognized for Excellence in Pro Bono Service

04.11.23 In The Media

Steve Pflaum Discusses the Illinois Supreme Court Statutory Court Fee Task Force's Recent Report in the *Illinois Bar Journal*

02.28.23 Firm News

Illinois Supreme Court Statutory Court Fee Task Force Releases New Report as a Follow-Up to 2016 Recommendations, Chaired by Steve Pflaum

September 27, 2022 Firm News

Steven Pflaum Honored with Justice John Paul Stevens Award



August 18, 2022 Firm News

60 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2023 *Best Lawyers*

July 6, 2022 Firm News

Illinois Supreme Court Adopts New Code of Judicial Conduct Developed by IJEC, Chaired by Steve Pflaum

June 1, 2022 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Secures 11 Ranked Practice Groups and 25 Recognized Attorneys in *Chambers USA* 2022

March 7, 2022 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Quoted in the Illinois Bar Journal on New Illinois Code of Judicial Conduct

February 2, 2022 Event

Steve Pflaum Testifies at Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee Hearing on Proposal from Illinois Judicial Ethics Committee

December 3, 2021 Event

Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee to Hold Hearing on Proposal from Illinois Judicial Ethics Committee, Chaired by Steve Pflaum

September 23, 2021 Publication

Justices Denied? Impact of the Judicial Districts Act on Incumbent Justices of the Illinois Supreme Court and Appellate Court

September 8, 2021 Publication

The Most Important Property Tax Exemption Decision in Years

August 18, 2021 Firm News

52 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2022 *Best Lawyers*

May 20, 2021 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Secures 11 Ranked Practice Groups and 20 Recognized Attorneys in *Chambers USA* 2021

May 4, 2021 Event

Key Ethical Considerations for In-House Attorneys

August 19, 2020 Firm News

46 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2021 *Best Lawyers*

April 27, 2020 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Quoted in Chicago Daily Law Bulletin on Illinois Supreme Court Emergency Order

February 3, 2020 Firm News

Illinois Super Lawyers 2020 Recognizes 39 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys

October 15, 2019 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Quoted in *Illinois Lawyer Now* on Judicial Election FAQ



August 15, 2019 Firm News

45 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2020 Best Lawyers

July 22, 2019 Firm News

Steven Pflaum Honored with 2019 Edward J. Lewis II Pro Bono Service Award

February 18, 2019 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Quoted in *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*

December 7, 2018 Firm News

Steven Pflaum Honored by the Illinois Judges Association

September 25, 2018 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Obtains Unanimous Supreme Court Decision for Illinois Health and Hospital Association

August 24, 2018 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Featured in *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* on New Legislation Reforming Illinois Law Regarding Court Fees and Costs

August 15, 2018 Firm News

45 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2019 Best Lawyers

August 13, 2018 In The Media

Steven F. Pflaum Featured on the "Lawyer Spotlight" for the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism

August 13, 2018 In The Media

Steven F. Pflaum Interviewed for KWQC-TV News Story

August 13, 2018 In The Media

Steven F. Pflaum Interviewed in *Madison-St. Clair Record* on Upcoming Illinois Court Fee Legislation

August 13, 2018 In The Media

Steven F. Pflaum Quoted in *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*

August 13, 2018 In The Media

Steven F. Pflaum Quoted in *Law360*

August 7, 2018 Publication

Civil Appeals: State and Federal

July 9, 2018 Firm News

46 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2016 Best Lawyers

July 9, 2018 Firm News

41 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Listed in 2016 Illinois Super Lawyers

July 9, 2018 Firm News

Steven F. Pflaum Discusses Court Fees in *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*



July 9, 2018 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Secures Appeal Victory for Former CME Pit Broker

July 9, 2018 Firm News

45 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2017 Best Lawyers

July 6, 2018 Firm News

44 Neal Gerber Eisenberg Attorneys Included in 2018 Best Lawyers

July 6, 2018 Firm News

Neal Gerber Eisenberg Obtains Dismissal of Defamation Lawsuit for Newspaper and Reporter

July 6, 2018 Firm News

NGE Obtains Injunction Against IDFPR to Prohibit Prosecution of Property Tax Lawyers for Purported Violations of the Appraisal Act

July 6, 2018 In The Media

Steven Pflaum Quoted in *News-Gazette*