



C. Zachary Vaughn

Partner

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Practices & Industries

- Catastrophic Loss
- Class Actions
- Commercial Disputes
- Construction Disputes
- Industry-wide Litigation
- Insurance Coverage
- Managed Care
- Medical Device
- Medical Malpractice Defense & Healthcare
- Nursing Home & Long Term Care
- Personal Injury & Property Damage
- Product Liability
- Professional Liability
- Subrogation & Insurance Recovery
- Toxic Tort / Asbestos
- Transportation Litigation including Trucking & Aviation

Overview

Zach is a partner based in Wiedner & McAuliffe's St. Louis office. He manages the civil litigation practice in St. Louis and Southern Illinois. He also maintains a nationwide catastrophic loss trial practice. Zach is frequently asked to step in as trial counsel in high-risk cases in the weeks before trial. He defends insurers and self-insureds throughout the

United States and internationally in actions involving medical malpractice, transportation, product, premises and professional liability, construction negligence, and coverage disputes.

Zach has achieved the AV Preeminent Rating, Martindale-Hubbell's highest possible rating for legal and ethical standards. From 2011 to 2019, Zach was selected by his peers for inclusion in *Super Lawyers* list of "Rising Stars." He also received a Trial Lawyer Excellence award from the Cook County Jury Verdict Reporter.

When Zach is outside the courtroom, he enjoys spending time with his wife, two sons, and their Great Pyrenees, Tucker.

Credentials

Education

- J.D., Southern Illinois University School of Law, 2004
- B.A., Eastern Illinois University, 2001

Admissions

- Illinois
- Missouri
- Michigan
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois (Trial Bar)
- U.S. District Court, Central District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Missouri

Affiliations

- Chicago Bar Association
- Illinois State Bar Association
- Claims & Litigation Management Alliance (CLM)

Notable Decisions

- Zach secured an extraordinary verdict in Cook County, Illinois against a top plaintiffs' firm after a two-week admitted liability trial. Zach's truck driver failed to yield and broad-sided Plaintiff's vehicle. Plaintiff sustained a traumatic brain injury, PTSD, anxiety/depression and a cervical myelopathy, which resulted in a four-level anterior cervical discectomy and fusion surgery. Her medical expenses were \$750,000. In addition, due to her disabilities, Plaintiff's physiatrist prescribed a \$4 million life care plan. Her doctors testified that all of these expenses were

caused by the accident, as Plaintiff had never had any neck issues before. With liability admitted and limited damages defenses, Plaintiff's pre-trial demand was \$7.75 million. Our client offered \$2 million. At trial, Plaintiff asked the jury for over \$15 million. After deliberating 12 hours over 2 days, the jury returned a verdict of \$1.26 million, just over half the pre-trial offer.

- Zach achieved a monumental defense verdict on behalf of a nationally-known target defendant in Champaign County, Illinois. Plaintiff's decedent was a 40-year-old, married father of two girls. He was on his way to his job when an employee of Zach's client crossed the highway center line and ran head-on into his vehicle, killing both men. Defendant's employee was employed as a welder. The accident occurred around 6 a.m. as he was driving to a jobsite, and the accident happened just a mile short of the site. The sole issue presented to the jury was whether he had been transporting work materials found in his car on behalf of Defendant, thus placing him in the course and scope of his employment. Plaintiff put forth an extremely compelling damages case and requested \$10-\$25 million. As counsel suggested to the jury, if it believed any one of the four witnesses that Defendant's driver had been carrying work materials, they must find for Plaintiff. After deliberating four hours, the jury returned a unanimous defense verdict. As a result, Zach was bestowed the Trial Lawyer Excellence Award from the Cook County Jury Verdict Reporter.
- Zach obtained a defense verdict in an admitted negligence trucking trial in Cook County. Plaintiff, 45, was rear-ended by a delivery truck while stopped at a light. At the scene, he complained of neck and back pain and was taken to the hospital, where he was treated for lumbar and cervical strains. Over the next 18 months, Plaintiff continued treatment. After none of the care alleviated his symptoms, a neurosurgeon performed a three-level fusion in his lower back and a fusion in his neck. Zach's client admitted fault and stipulated to Plaintiff's bills – approximately \$600,000 – but contested that the accident caused Plaintiff's injuries. Zach introduced Plaintiff's pre-existing degenerative disc disease, as well as his prior accidents with similar injuries. Plaintiff admitted he always had pain but said it was tolerable until the accident. The treating neurosurgeon testified Plaintiff's condition was stable and in no need of treatment when the accident exacerbated his condition, tipping him to surgery. Zach presented pre-accident treating physicians to show that Plaintiff's complaints were continuous, and that the accident did nothing to alter his course of treatment. After deliberating approximately 30 minutes, the jury returned a complete defense verdict.