



## Marissa L. Downs

PARTNER

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Marissa Downs is a seasoned construction litigator who focuses her practice on complex construction, product liability, and other technical-commercial disputes. She has extensive experience representing contractors, developers, owners, manufacturers, and others in a variety of complex litigation matters, including scheduling, changing order disputes, productivity claims, international and domestic contract, design and manufacturing defect litigation, insurance coverage, fraud, fiduciary breach, and shareholder disputes.

Clients turn to Marissa most often for her advocacy skills. Marissa developed a passion for litigation in law school after being selected to compete on Northwestern's inter-collegiate National Trial Team. She remains a zealous advocate and has arbitrated multiple matters before the American Arbitration Association (AAA) and tried cases to conclusion in both federal and state courts.

While comfortable in the courtroom, Marissa recognizes that most disputes settle before that and approaches each case with a goal-oriented and fee-sensitive outlook on behalf of her clients to determine their best outcome.

Prior to joining Laurie & Brennan, Marissa gained over a decade of experience working for larger law firms and prides herself and her firm on the ability to offer "Big Law" service at more affordable rates.

She gained valuable litigation experience clerking for Justice Robert Eastaugh of the Alaska Supreme Court, interning at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in The Hague, Netherlands, and through competitive internship placements at the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, the Office of the State Appellate Defender (Illinois) and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

Before entering law school, Marissa was an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Department of Defense and spent a year in Rwanda working with the International Rescue Committee. Although Marissa has called Chicago home for over 15 years, having been born and raised in Dallas, Texas, she still cannot bring herself to root for the Bears.

### EDUCATION

- ▶ Northwestern Pritzker School of Law J.D., *cum laude*, 2008
  - ▶ National Trial Team
  - ▶ Senior Articles Editor, *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*
- ▶ University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, B.A, highest honors, 2001
  - ▶ Morehead-Cain Scholarship
  - ▶ Phi Beta Kappa



### RECENT NEWS

- ▶ Laurie & Brennan Attorneys Conduct Mock Trial at CFMA National Conference
- ▶ The Project as Proof: The Parameters of the Duty to Preserve Construction Defects
- ▶ Laurie & Brennan Welcomes New Partner Marissa Downs

### Awards and Honors



- ▶ Ranked by Leading Lawyers in Illinois for Construction Law (2020 – present)
- ▶ Recognized in *Chicago Business Journal's* "Women of Influence" (2018)
- ▶ Named in *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin's* "40 Under Forty" (Class of 2018)
- ▶ Designated an Emerging Lawyer in Commercial Litigation by Leading Lawyers (2015 – 2019)
- ▶ Designated an Illinois Rising Star by Super Lawyers (2013 – 2019)
- ▶ Recipient of David T. Brown Community Service Award (December 2016)
- ▶ Chicago Bar Association Leadership Institute (2015)
- ▶ Hart Leadership Fellow, Duke University (2001 – 2002)
- ▶ Morehead-Cain Scholar, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (1997 – 2001)

### Professional Organizations



- ▶ American Bar Association
  - Forum on Construction Law
- ▶ Professional Women in Construction
- ▶ Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago
- ▶ National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
- ▶ Illinois Bar Association

## Representative Matters



- ▶ Represented Indiana concrete placement subcontractor before Illinois trial and appellate courts and succeeded in having the claims dismissed and reinforcing the limits of long-arm jurisdiction.
- ▶ Represented general contractor in three-week arbitration, securing complete recovery of 30+ unpaid change orders in complex scheduling and productivity dispute involving one of the largest windfarms in Central America.
- ▶ Represented judges accused of misconduct in a trial before a 7-member panel of the Illinois Courts Commission.
- ▶ Represented corporate officers and directors of manufacturing company accused of fiduciary breach in going-private transaction, securing defense verdict following week-long trial in the Circuit Court of Cook County.
- ▶ Represented company sued in breach of contract claim before single arbitrator and secured complete defense verdict and award of attorneys' fees.
- ▶ Served as North American claims coordinating counsel for global products manufacturer, advising on trial strategy, insurance coverage, and other issues.

## Pro Bono Representation

- ▶ Sought clemency on behalf of a man serving a natural life sentence following a 2001 conviction and subsequent sentencing under the Illinois habitual offender statute.
- ▶ Represented Stage IV colon cancer survivor in a federal jury trial seeking redress for damages suffered as a result of indifferent medical care at Stateville Correctional Center.
- ▶ Represented indigent client in an administrative hearing before the Illinois Department of Health and Human Services related to the denial of food assistance benefits.
- ▶ Secured favorable settlement on behalf of an indigent client in product liability claim against a consumer product manufacturer.
- ▶ Assisted an undocumented adult woman brought into the country when she was five obtain legal status pursuant to rights afforded under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act.

## Community Involvement



- ▶ Lakeview Pantry
  - Board of Directors (2018 – present)
  - Young Leaders Board, President (2016-2017)
  - Member at large (2015 – 2016)
- ▶ Illinois Prison Project, Volunteer Attorney (2021 – present)

## Publications



- ▶ Featured, "People on The Move: Marissa Downs, Much Shelist," *Crain's Chicago Business* (July 17, 2020)
- ▶ Author, "Seventh Circuit Decision May Spur Limited Revival of HAMP Claims Against Loan Servicers," *National Law Review* (April 24, 2012)
- ▶ Author, "Contractual Non-Reliance Clauses: Insulating Defendants from Civil Fraud Claims Since 1995," *National Law Review* (March 18, 2012)

## Presentations



- ▶ Discussion Leader, "Deposing the GC's Project Manager," ABA Forum, Division 1 Toolbox Talk Series (2021)

## Bar and Court Admissions



- ▶ Illinois, 2009
- ▶ U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, 2009
- ▶ Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, 2016
- ▶ U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, 2014