



## Christopher D. Strunk

Of Counsel

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456 Montgomery Street, Suite 1800, San Francisco, CA, 94104-1251

### **Chris has more than 20 years of experience litigating complex environmental and toxic tort disputes.**

He focuses on the defense of large, multi-party environmental matters, including mass tort and products liability litigation involving alleged toxic injury arising from asbestos, lead, mold, solvents, and other contaminants. He has represented microchip and technology companies, chemical and petrochemical companies, heavy equipment manufacturers, and the pesticide and fertilizer industry. Over the past five years, he has also developed a significant industrial hemp and cannabis practice, defending ancillary and plant-touching businesses in environmental disputes and litigation.

#### **Environmental**

Chris has extensive knowledge of relevant state and federal environmental statutes, with considerable experience in CERCLA and RCRA claims. He has also successfully defended numerous nuisance and trespass cases arising out of alleged site contamination, and aggressively defends clients in administrative enforcement actions arising out of alleged violations of state law and local ordinances.

#### **Toxic Tort**

Chris is particularly experienced in the defense of toxic tort matters, having litigated dozens of cases from filing through final resolution in both state and federal court. He enjoys the challenge of developing creative, “out of the box” approaches to complex issues in order to obtain the best result possible for his clients, whether that means a reduced settlement, winning a dispositive motion, or obtaining a defense verdict. He has also served in a national counsel role for several product manufacturers, overseeing and managing complex litigation and spearheading the coordination of statewide discovery.

#### **Regulatory**

Recognizing that the best defense in a lawsuit is avoiding one in the first place, Chris counsels clients on compliance with state and federal environmental statutes and assists clients in drafting product

warnings and other liability-limiting documents in order to proactively limit downstream litigation risks. Chris also has experience developing internal policies and procedures for his clients to address environmental risks, including responding to the airborne or water-borne releases of contaminants. Finally, Chris assists clients in managing environmental incidents and their aftermath, including appropriate response and reporting, managing health and safety issues, and working with regulators to address remediation issues.

### **Business Disputes & Transactions**

In the commercial context, Chris has experience with business litigation, including business torts, breach of contract claims, insurance coverage, and bankruptcy. He has counseled businesses, large and small, on all aspects of business formation, operation, and dissolution. In the process, he has drafted operating agreements, vendor agreements, policies and procedures, commercial leases, liability releases, rights agreements, and agreements governing ownership of intellectual property. Chris also has experience overseeing environmental due diligence in real estate transactions involving contaminated sites.

### **Education**

- Boston College (B.A., *cum laude*, 1995)
  - English and Political Science
- Villanova University (J.D., 1998)

### **Bar Admissions**

- California
- Illinois
- Pennsylvania

### **Court Admissions**

- U.S. District Court – Northern District of California
- U.S. District Court - Central District of California
- U.S. District Court - Northern District of Illinois
- *The Legal 500*, recognition in Environmental Litigation (2019)

## Industrial Hemp & Cannabis

Chris is the co-leader of Beveridge & Diamond's Industrial Hemp & Cannabis industry team. He has represented clients in the industrial hemp and cannabis sector since 2014, assisting companies in complying with state environmental laws, managing downstream risk, and defending them in high-stakes product liability litigation.

### Representative Work

- Winning a motion to dismiss a claim brought against an out-of-state hydroponics supplier to the cannabis industry in a high stakes toxic tort matter involving pesticide exposure with more than \$10,000,000 in potential liability.
- Drafting industry-appropriate product warnings for suppliers to the industry, including packaging and plant supplement manufacturers.
- Providing guidance to the industrial hemp community on environmental liabilities in the wake of hemp legalization via the 2018 Farm Bill.
- Defending cannabis growers in court and before state-level administrative agencies for alleged violations of environmental laws and ordinances.

Chris is nationally recognized for his work on the environmental issues facing the cannabis industry, including litigation risks, state regulations, and agency enforcement. He is the vice chair of programming for the American Bar Association's TIPS Cannabis Law Committee, and serves on the Defense Research Institute's 2019 Cannabis Law Conference Committee. His nationally-published work has been featured in the Defense Research Institute's *The Voice* and in the American Bar Association Environmental Law Section's *The Year in Review 2018*. In 2018, *DataBird Research Journal* named Chris one of "250 Cannabis Law Experts." In addition, he is a member of the National Cannabis Bar Association and the San Francisco Bar Association's Cannabis Law Section.

*Possession, use, distribution, and sale of cannabis may be a federal crime. B&D does not provide any guidance or assistance in violating federal law or in complying with federal law.*

## Representative Matters

*Prior results do not guarantee future outcomes.*

Chris's experience includes:

- Participating in a three-week-long complex federal CERCLA trial as a lead trial lawyer, resulting in a verdict which was less than 25% of plaintiff's "bottom line" pre-trial demand.
- Obtaining a complete dismissal on behalf of a medical cannabis plant nutrient manufacturer defendant in a high-stakes catastrophic toxic injury claim on personal jurisdiction grounds.

- Aggressively defending a large microchip manufacturer in multi-jurisdiction mass tort litigation involving exposure to glycol ethers in “clean rooms” and contributing to multiple favorable settlements.
- Successfully defending a toxic injury claim on behalf of an industrial brake manufacturer involving an Australian resident plaintiff, necessitating investigation, discovery, and litigation on two continents and over \$35,000,000 in claimed economic damages.
- Prosecuting a complex breach of contract, business tort, and Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 claim on behalf of an equine business owner and obtaining a substantial settlement.
- After obtaining concessions at deposition from plaintiffs' key expert, winning summary judgment for an industrial equipment manufacturer upon reconsideration in an asbestos-related death claim involving more than \$1.5 million in claimed economic damages.
- Developing a detailed spill response protocol for a large technology company pursuant to relevant state and federal environmental statutes.
- Drafting detailed product warnings and downstream liability limiting documents for an international pesticide and fertilizer manufacturer.

## Publications

June 3, 2019

### **USDA Issues Legal Opinion on Hemp**

Beveridge & Diamond

April 22, 2019

### **Hemp Transporters are Still Dodging Potholes Despite the Farm Bill**

National Industrial Hemp Council Blog

April 9, 2019

### **Cannabis Business CEQA Exemption Expires on July 1: Will You Have a Permit or License to Conduct Business?**

Beveridge & Diamond

April 1, 2019

### **Too Much to “Bare”: US Supreme Court Rejects Bare Metal Defense Under Federal Maritime Law**

Beveridge & Diamond

February 13, 2019

### **Baby Steps in a Victory for Industrial Hemp and the CBD Industry**

The Voice

December 21, 2018

**2018 Farm Bill Legalizes Industrial Hemp**

Beveridge & Diamond

December 21, 2018

**Nipped in the Bud: Massachusetts Regulators Send Strong Message to Cannabis Industry About Using Unapproved Pesticides On Cannabis Plants**

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