



John C. Cruden

Principal

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John offers clients the benefit of decades of experience as a top environmental lawyer, a leader of major bar and environmental organizations, and a distinguished military career.

John provides strategic counsel on high-stakes environmental and natural resources litigation, civil and criminal enforcement, and compliance. Working with clients makes the practice of law worthy and valuable to him as they advance strategic needs while protecting human health and the environment.

For more than two decades, John served as a senior leader on environment and natural resource matters at the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), where he supervised some of the department's most significant litigation, including the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Love Canal, and Bunker Hill litigation. As the Senate-confirmed, Assistant Attorney General, ENRD, John worked on the most high-profile environment cases, and personally negotiated the multi-billion dollar resolutions of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the Volkswagen emissions scandal. These cases required a great deal of coordination, expert assistance, and sophisticated management of numerous players to reach successful outcomes. This experience has given John insight into the workings of large corporations, as well as into the challenges that major companies face in lawsuits.

As the former President of the Environmental Law Institute, the former Chair of the American Bar Association (ABA) Section on Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources, and the immediate past President of the American College of Environmental Lawyers, John has led each of the premier environmental organizations in the United States. In addition, he was the first government attorney to be elected and serve as the President of the District of Columbia Bar, now the largest bar in the nation.

Professional Background

John's leadership is a defining characteristic of his long and distinguished legal career. Before joining the DOJ, John was the Chief Legislative Counsel of the U.S. Army. After graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point, John served in Airborne, Ranger, and Special Forces units in Germany and Vietnam. His subsequent military assignments include as a criminal prosecutor in Germany and civil trial lawyer in the Pentagon; Chief of Litigation Branch, Europe; General Counsel, Defense Nuclear Agency; Staff Judge Advocate in Germany; and Director of Administrative and Civil Law, Judge Advocate General's School, Charlottesville, Virginia. His military

education includes being a Fellow, Army War College, and the Command and General Staff College. He is a graduate of the University of Santa Clara Law school (summa cum laude) and the University of Virginia (MA with honors).

John's awards for government and military service include the President Rank Award from three different Presidents, the Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star.

Education

- United States Military Academy (B.S., 1968)
- Santa Clara University (J.D., *summa cum laude*, 1974)
- University of Virginia (M.A., 1975)
 - Foreign Affairs

Bar Admissions

- District of Columbia
- California

Court Admissions

- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals - D.C. Circuit
- U.S. District Court – District of Columbia
- U.S. Superior Court - District of Columbia
- U.S. Court for Berlin

Community Involvement

John is a volunteer swim coach for the Special Olympics and a past recipient of Fairfax County's Volunteer of the Year award for his work with mentally handicapped children. He and his wife Sharon have two adult children.

Honors & Awards

- *Chambers and Partners – USA*, Band 1 in Environmental Law (2023-2025)
- *The Legal 500*, recognition in Environmental Litigation and Regulatory Law (2019, 2022-2025)
- *Lawdragon Green 500: Leaders in Environmental Law*, Hall of Fame (2021, 2023, 2024, 2025)

- Recognition in *Lexology Index – Environment & Climate* - Global Elite Thought Leader in Environmental Law (2018-2025)
- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, a Best Lawyers® publication, recognition in Environmental Law and Environmental Litigation (2024-2025)

Leadership

John's leadership experience includes serving as:

- Immediate past President of the American College of Environmental Lawyers;
- Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) of the U.S. DOJ, 2015 - 2017;
- ENRD Deputy Assistant Attorney General, 1995 - 2011;
- ENRD Environmental Enforcement Section Chief, 1991-1995;
- President of the Environmental Law Institute (2011-2014), a nationally recognized bipartisan organization known for its mission of making the law work for people, places, and the planet;
- The first government attorney elected President of the District of Columbia Bar, the largest bar in the nation;
- The first government attorney selected as Chairman of the American Bar Association's Section of Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources; and
- A past member of the Board of the National Conference of Bar Presidents, the D.C. Bar Foundation, the District of Columbia Bar Association, the Judicial Conference of the District of Columbia Circuit's Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services, and as a member of the Administrative Conference of the United States.