



Michael F. Vitris

Principal

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Mike outworks his opponents at every step.

Mike is a nationally recognized environmental litigator who defends companies in high-stakes environmental mass torts, class actions, contaminated property disputes, and major Clean Air Act enforcement actions.

Clients rely on Mike for his ability to quickly master complex technical facts, outwork his adversaries, and deliver winning results. He approaches each case with determination and grit, immersing himself in his clients' businesses to apply the law to their unique circumstances and position them for success.

Mike's representation of major energy, chemical, and waste management companies requires a deep understanding of industrial processes, environmental regulations, and toxicological effects. With his background as a public school teacher, he translates these complex topics into clear, compelling narratives that convey his client's story.

Mike brings valuable courtroom experience to his practice, taking on critical roles in jury and bench trials, as well as administrative hearings. He conducts direct and cross-examinations of key experts and fact witnesses in high-stakes environmental matters, demonstrating a strategic approach that leverages his ability to simplify technical concepts for diverse audiences.

Committed to public service, Mike serves on the State Bar of Texas Environmental & Natural Resources Law Section's Executive Council and previously chaired the Austin Bar Environmental Section. Before becoming an attorney, Mike taught sixth and seventh-grade social studies as a public school teacher with Teach for America.

Representative Matters

Enforcement Defense

- CERCLA – Defense of major civil enforcement action by US DOJ against a Fortune 500 (F500) multinational manufacturer with government seeking over \$20 million in costs.
- Clean Air Act – Lead counsel in defense of civil enforcement action by the state attorney general against F500 energy company arising from major refinery fire with more than \$60 million in potential civil penalty exposure.

- Clean Air Act – Defense of Fortune 50 energy company in DOJ/EPA enforcement action for alleged RMP violations at multiple facilities with more than \$30 million in potential civil penalty exposure.
- Clean Water Act – Represented a multinational manufacturer in federal environmental crimes case and related EPA debarment action alleging unauthorized discharge into a public sewer system without permit.

Litigation

- Odor Nuisance Mass Tort/Class Action – Co-lead trial counsel defending a mass tort case with more than 500 plaintiffs and consolidated class actions against a major waste management company, alleging nuisance and personal injuries from landfill odors.
- Contaminated Property – Co-lead trial counsel for one of the largest school districts in the country in state tort action seeking clean-up costs for historical contamination at school property.
- Chemical Plant Fire – Lead counsel defending multinational electronics manufacturer in mass tort alleging personal injuries from emissions at chemical plant fire during Hurricane Harvey.
- Groundwater Contamination – Defense of multinational energy company in a lawsuit by local government alleging groundwater contamination from 1,4-Dioxane.

Permit Defense

- Petrochemical Facility – Defense of major petrochemical company in a challenge brought by a local government to air permit amendment. Local government withdrew the challenge without any concessions from the client.
- Landfill – Represented major waste management company in challenge to landfill expansion permit. Prevailed at week-long evidentiary hearing and defeated all challenges.
- Power Plant – Represented energy company in challenge to air permit for natural gas power plant. Reached favorable settlement with plaintiffs.
- Landfill – Defense of major waste management company in challenge to landfill permit. Secured favorable settlement, resolving all challenges prior to evidentiary hearing.

Education

- University of Texas - Austin (B.A., History, *with Honors*)
- University of Texas School of Law (J.D., *with Honors*)

Bar Admissions

- Texas

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court – Southern District of Texas

Professional Affiliations

- Institute for Energy Law, ESG Practice Committee Officer

Honors & Awards

- "Best Lawyers: Ones To Watch," a Best Lawyers® publication, recognition in Environmental Litigation and Commercial Litigation (2024-2025)
- *Super Lawyers*, part of *Thomson Reuters*, Texas Rising Star in Environmental Litigation (2022-2024)
- *The Legal 500*, recognition in Environmental Litigation (2022)