

DONIELLE S. WILLIS

ASSOCIATE



AREAS OF PRACTICE

Premises & Retail Liability
Property Litigation
Product Liability
Automobile Liability
Insurance Services – Coverage & Bad Faith Litigation
Public Entity & Civil Rights Litigation
School Leaders' Liability
Miscellaneous Professional Liability
Insurance Agents & Brokers Liability
General Liability

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ADMISSIONS

Ohio
2017

U.S. District Court Southern
District of Ohio
2017

Indiana
2020

Kentucky
2024

U.S. District Court Southern
District of Indiana
2024

EDUCATION

University of Cincinnati College of
Law (J.D., 2017)

Northern Kentucky University
(B.A., cum laude, 2014)

OVERVIEW

Donielle is an associate focusing her practice in the areas of premises and retail liability, school leaders' liability, property damage, product liability and insurance coverage. She handles personal injury matters related to commercial and passenger motor vehicle cases and on behalf of retail establishments. Additionally, Donielle defends claims on behalf of companies for miscellaneous issues filed with the Ohio Department of Insurance and/or Ohio Civil Rights Commission.

Donielle has a diverse civil litigation practice with extensive experience briefing dispositive motions and achieving favorable decisions in numerous cases. Donielle's background of working for a plaintiff's firm allows her to be one step ahead of opposing counsels and anticipate their position in cases.

Donielle values strong attorney-client relationships built on trust and responsive communication. She enjoys working with her clients to better understand their individual and specific needs to return a successful resolution for each matter. With these fundamentals, Donielle offers practical guidance while empowering her clients to identify and work towards their litigation goals.

In 2014, Donielle earned her a B.A. in Criminal Justice from Northern Kentucky University. She received her *juris doctor* degree from University of Cincinnati - College of Law in 2017. She is admitted to practice in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

In her free time, Donielle enjoys being a mother to her toddler and two golden retrievers. She also loves teaching at a local barre studio.

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THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Unironically, Ohio Supreme Court Looks to Language of Umbrella Policy to Find Coverage

Cincinnati
Insurance Services – Coverage & Bad Faith Litigation
Product Liability
October 1, 2022
Defense Digest, Vol. 28, No.

HONORS & AWARDS

Ohio Super Lawyers Rising Star
2020-2021

ASSOCIATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

Cincinnati Bar Association

Indiana State Bar Association

Ohio State Bar Association

YEAR JOINED

2021

RESULTS

Motion to Enforce Oral Settlement Agreement Affirmed by First District Court of Appeals

**Non-Profit D&O
Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial Practice
June 18, 2024**

We won a decision from the First District Court of Appeals affirming the trial court's decision to grant our client's motion to enforce an oral settlement agreement. We defended a condominium owners association against a lawsuit filed by several unit owners. The parties went to mediation, during which their attorneys agreed on the settlement terms. However, several of the plaintiff unit owners refused to sign the written settlement agreement.

Summary Judgment Obtained in Ohio Dog Bite Case

**Premises & Retail Liability
March 29, 2024**

We secured summary judgment for a landlord in a dog bite case. The plaintiff was on a rental property as a federal census worker and claimed a "vicious" dog chased her and that, while she was fleeing, she fell in a hole surrounded by bricks in the front yard, resulting in injuries. The plaintiff filed suit against both the tenant and landlord, alleging they were negligent, negligent per se and liable under Ohio's dog bite statute. The landlord was not an owner, keeper or harbinger of the dog; therefore, no liability could be imposed under Ohio's dog bite statute.

Negligence claims against insurance broker dismissed.

**Insurance Agents & Brokers Liability
November 1, 2022**

We successfully defended an insurance broker in a negligence claim. After a tornado damaged his property, the third-party plaintiff rented an excavator that was damaged due to a collision during its operation. Before renting the excavator, the third-party plaintiff contacted our client, an insurance broker, requesting that the agency procure insurance to protect him against loss to the excavator. Our client arranged for third-party plaintiff's purchase of two policies; however, the specific collision that occurred was not covered under either policy.

Ohio Court of Appeals affirms summary judgment for nail salon.

**Premises & Retail Liability
April 22, 2022**

We successfully defended an appeal of a trial court grant of summary judgment in favor of a nail salon in a slip-and-fall case. The plaintiff alleged she fell in an untreated wet area inside the salon on a rainy day. However, the plaintiff failed to produce any evidence about the source of the "wet area," or that the salon had actual or constructive knowledge of the wet area prior to the plaintiff's fall. The trial court granted summary judgment in favor of the salon and the Ohio Court of Appeals affirmed that decision.

Claims against police department dismissed.

**Public Entity & Civil Rights Litigation
November 22, 2022**

We successfully argued that a plaintiff's claims against a local police department were precluded by law. First, we pointed out that our client was not an entity that could be sued. Second, we emphasized that the statute of limitations applied to bar the plaintiff's claims. Finally, we contended our client was immune from liability pursuant to R.C. § 2744.01, even if it could be sued. The plaintiff attempted to argue his case for excessive use of force, malicious prosecution and emotional distress for being arrested after he was fired from his place of employment.

SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

Successfully argued in Motion for Summary Judgment that Plaintiffs' claims were precluded by law because the general grant of immunity pursuant to R.C. §2744.01 applied to them as a political subdivision and no exception to immunity existed. Plaintiffs, a minor student and parent, filed suit against the school district, school board, supervising teacher, and principal alleging they were negligent when an afterschool science project (through the STEM program) caught fire causing burn injuries to the student. This included the exception that allows for negligence claims when there is a physical defect within or on the grounds of the entity. Further, the individual employees were also granted immunity because they were acting in their official capacities and thus the same analysis afforded to the school applied to the individuals. The Judge ultimately granted our Motion and dismissed Plaintiffs' claims.