



Dennis A. Di Palma, Esq.
Attorney

Vernis & Bowling of
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AREAS OF PRACTICE

Civil Litigation
Construction and Construction Defect Litigation
First and Third Party Property and Casualty Claims

BAR & COURT ADMISSION

Florida Bar

EDUCATION

Graduate:
Ava Maria School of Law, *Juris Doctor*

Undergraduate:
John Carroll University, Bachelor Degree of Science in Business
Administration, Majoring in Finance

Dennis A. Di Palma was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. He graduated from John Carroll University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. After college, Dennis moved to Southwest Florida to pursue a career playing professional golf.

Dennis then went on to attend Ave Maria School of Law, where he earned his *Juris Doctor*. While in law school, Dennis was a member of *Phi Alpha Delta*, Federalist Society, Lex Vitae Society, and St. Thomas More Society. Dennis was admitted to the Florida Bar and joined Vernis & Bowling to practice civil litigation, focusing on first party and construction defect defense.

Previously, Dennis interned with the State Attorney's Office in the 20th Judicial Circuit, and clerked at Wood, Buckel & Carmichael in Naples, FL.

When not working, Dennis loves to golf. He also enjoys hiking, kayaking, and lounging at the beach.



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Thomas is a native of Charleston, South Carolina. He comes from

a multi-generational family of legal professionals with deep roots in Charleston and the Lowcountry. He attended the University of South Carolina as an Alumni Scholar. During his undergraduate years he served as a page in the South Carolina House of Representatives, an intern in the office of the President of the University of South Carolina, Chief of Staff to the Student Body President and an officer in his fraternity. In May of 1989, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, with a minor in History. He enrolled in the University of South Carolina School of Law in August of 1989, where he received his *Juris Doctor* degree in May of 1992.

Upon graduation from law school, Thomas was offered and accepted a judicial clerkship with Judge William L. Howard, Sr., Resident Judge of the Ninth Judicial Circuit for South Carolina. During his year spent in judicial clerkship, he had the opportunity to participate in over forty civil and criminal trials around the State of South Carolina. A most valuable learning experience, affording the opportunity to observe a number of preeminent trial lawyers from around the State.

In November of 1999, Thomas was elected to begin a six-year term as a commissioner of the Commissioners of Public Works for the City of Charleston. Thomas was re-elected 2005, 2011 and 2017. His current term expires in 2023. He has served as chairman of the Commission since 2003. During that time, CWS has been upgraded to a AAA credit rating, one of fewer than thirty combined water and sewer utilities in the Country to receive such designation from both Moody's and Standard & Poor.

Thomas is a Department Managing Attorney in the firm's Charleston, SC office. He is excited and energized by the opportunities to provide quality legal representation to Vernis & Bowling's array of clients and happy to be a part of the team.

Thomas has extensive experience in civil and administrative trial practice as well as experience in appellate practice, having argued before the South Carolina Court of Appeals, South Carolina Supreme Court, United States Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit and the Multi-District Litigation Panel, having been involved at the earliest stages of EIFS litigation in the Southeast. His primary practice areas include Construction Defect, Personal Injury, Automobile Liability, Premises Liability, Dram Shop Liability, Professional Liability, Products Liability and Intentional Torts. He also practices in Insurance Coverage, Mass Torts/Environmental/Toxic Torts, Bad Faith, and Appellate Practice. He is well-versed in all aspects of Insurance Defense and General Civil Litigation.

His extensive civil trial experience includes having tried more

than sixty cases to verdict. He has participated in more than two hundred fifty mediations, both as an attorney for a litigant and/or as mediator. He has tried more than a dozen cases before single arbitrators or arbitration panels.

Thomas is a Certified Circuit Court Mediator by the South Carolina Supreme Court Board of Arbitrator and Mediator Certification, having been first certified in 2011.

Thomas knows the venues, and many of the attorneys and the judges around the State, a knowledge gained through over thirty years of experience and multi-generational legal exposure and is able to share those insights with carriers when assessing individual cases.

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Brandt Carlson joined Vernis & Bowling in March 2020, when he relocated his legal practice from Sarasota to St. Petersburg. Brandt's prior litigation experience includes a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from commercial, construction, and complex civil defense to judgment collection and employment law. His primary exposure has been in handling insurance defense, major commercial disputes, and construction litigation in state and federal courts throughout Florida, where he has practiced since August 2015.

Brandt received his *J.D.* from the University of Florida, *cum laude*, in May 2015. During his time at the University of Florida, Brandt served as an editor for the *Florida Journal of International Law* and as an advocate on the prestigious Florida Moot Court Team, where he received the American College of Trial Lawyers Medal for Excellence in Advocacy. As a law student, Brandt spent his summers clerking for the Honorable Steven D. Merryday in the Middle District of Florida and interning for small firms specializing in first-party insurance litigation, employment law, and personal injury matters.

Brandt also pursued his undergraduate studies at the University of Florida, where he majored in Political Science and Economics with a minor in Philosophy. He graduated *summa cum laude* in May 2011 after publishing his senior thesis on election turnout in the United States.

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Brandt was raised in Riverview, Florida, and has lived and worked in multiple locations throughout the Sunshine State. In his free time, Brandt enjoys traveling, movies, and the great outdoors.

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Philip Fairman was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. Phil obtained a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master's Degree in Labor and Industrial Relations from the University of Cincinnati. Phil obtained his *Juris Doctor* from the University of Tulsa College of Law.

Phil began his legal career as a prosecutor with the State Attorney's office in Ft Myers. Phil then worked as a corporate attorney for Carnival Cruise Lines and then again as a prosecutor with the State Attorney's office in Sarasota.

Phil joined the Ft. Myers office of Vernis & Bowling of Southwest Florida nearly 20 years ago. Phil worked as an in-house liability trial attorney with St Paul-Travelers Insurance Company. Phil then worked for over a decade as an Assistant County Attorney for Charlotte County where he defended public entity liability claims. Phil returned to Vernis & Bowling of Southwest Florida where he continues to practice in the areas of property and casualty insurance, automobile liability, premises liability, and Director and Officers litigation. He represents insurance companies, insureds and self-insureds in trial and appellate litigation. Phil has represented clients in successful jury trials in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough and Highlands counties.

Phil is a member of the Florida Bar, Oklahoma Bar, Federal District Courts for the Southern and Middle Districts of Florida, and Federal District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma.

In his free time, Phil enjoys lap swimming, cruising with wife and his adult children, and cooking on his Big Green Egg. He is Tampa Bay Rays fan but still closely follows his hometown Cincinnati Reds.

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Jennifer Whitworth is an experienced insurance defense attorney representing insurers, insureds, and businesses in complex civil litigation. Licensed since 2011, her practice focuses on personal injury, personal and commercial auto and trucking liability, wrongful death, industrial accidents, products liability, strict liability, premises liability, construction defect, accounting malpractice, FLSA disputes, and first-party claims involving bad faith, UIM, and breach of contract. Jennifer also provides coverage opinions, drafts reservation of rights and denial letters for insurers, and handles declaratory judgment actions on behalf of insurers disputing coverage.

Jennifer delivers strategic, cost-effective legal representation with an emphasis on early evaluation, coverage analysis, strategic motion practice, and litigation efficiency. She has a strong record of securing favorable jury verdicts and summary judgments in high-exposure cases. Known for her responsiveness and practical insight, Jennifer is a valued partner to claims professionals across the insurance industry.

Outside of work, Jennifer enjoys hiking, traveling, cooking, and spending time with her husband, Bryan, their three sons—Logan, Ben, and Jake—and their pets, Annie and Whiskey.