



**George "Chip" H. Rieger
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AREAS OF PRACTICE

American with Disability Act Claims (A.D.A)
Appellate Practice
Arbitration
Automobile Liability (PIP/PD/BI/UM)
Bad Faith/Extra Contractual Litigation
Civil Litigation
Commercial Ground Transportation Litigation
Commercial Litigation
Condominium and Homeowners' Association Litigation
Construction and Construction Defect Litigation
Coverage & Declaratory Judgment Actions
Director & Officer Liability (D&O)
Employment Law/Employment Litigation
Errors & Omissions Liability (E&O)
First and Third Party Property and Casualty Claims
Garage and Garagekeepers Liability
General Liability Defense Litigation
Liability Defense
Liquor Liability
Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Negligent Security
Nursing Home Litigation
Premises Liability
Product Liability
Professional Liability/E & O
Rideshare Defense
SIU/Suspicious & Fraudulent Claims

Chip Rieger was born in Indianapolis but spent his formative years in Connecticut before moving to Tennessee in 1983. Chip earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of Tennessee and graduated from the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law at the University of Memphis. While a law student, he was a member of Phi Alpha Delta (Chief Justice) in addition to serving as a Bankruptcy Court Extern and as Vice President of the Student Bar Association.

Chip is the Department Managing Attorney for the Nashville, TN office of Vernis & Bowling. Prior to joining the firm, he was a partner at a national law firm. Chip was also the founding Member of The Rieger Law Firm and was a founding Member and Managing Partner of Oakley Rieger PLLC. He founded Oakley Rieger after spending the majority of his career as a partner in a large regional litigation defense firm, where he also served as a Managing Partner.

Prior to receiving his *Juris Doctorate*, Mr. Rieger was a Manager of a National Bank, responsible for operations and personnel at the retail level. After Law School, Chip started with a boutique employment law firm in Memphis before moving to Nashville and joining a regional firm. Mr. Rieger subsequently became a partner with his previous firm, where he served as a Managing Member of the Nashville office, overseeing operations and personnel. After 15 years, Chip decided to take his entrepreneurial spirit to another firm with a goal toward developing closer, more personal relationships with his clients by learning their business operations and goals, and partnering with them to achieve those goals.

Chip has a broad range of experience in litigation, including cases involving employment discrimination, FLSA, FMLA, ADA, retaliation, harassment, products liability, premises liability, transportation, personal injury, workers' compensation, insurance law and general civil defense. Chip has extensive experience supervising litigation teams in complex civil lawsuits. A part of his practice is also spent in the representation of management in employment law and related matters, pre-litigation corporate counseling, preventive strategies to avoid discrimination, management training and the creation of human resource tools.

Chip is proud to serve as a founding Board Member of Old School Farm, where he has served since its founding in 2013. Old School

Trucking
Uninsured/Underinsured Motorist Liability
Vertical Transportation Defense (Elevator/Escalator)
Workers' Compensation Defense
Wrongful Death

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Graduate:

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Farm is a non-profit dedicated to producing quality farm-to-table food while providing vocational training and employment for individuals with disabilities. Old School Farm was founded on the belief that creating a sustainable farm can also produce sustainable jobs while giving back to the community at large.

When Chip is not defending lawsuits or counseling clients, he is a frequent seminar speaker on a variety of industry topics. He is also a regular presenter for The Society of Human Resource Managers, Lorman Education Services and Sterling Education Services. Chip also offers more personal in-house training and counseling for his business clients.

Mr. Rieger is a Member of The Society of Human Resource Managers. He has served on the Employment Law and Civil Rights Committee of the Nashville Bar Association and as the Legal Counsel and Director of the Nashville Area Junior Chamber of Commerce. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Young Lawyers Division of the Nashville Bar Association and was a Professor of Employment Law and Tort Law at the Southeastern Career Institute. He is a member of the Memphis, Nashville, and Tennessee Bar Associations.

Chip is admitted to practice in all Federal Courts in the State of Tennessee and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit.

Chip was motivated to go to law school by a friend who convinced him he could take his law degree and apply it in any industry that interested him. That concept holds true today, as Chip gets the most enjoyment out his practice by meeting people in a wide variety of industries, learning what is important to them and helping them to achieve their goals.

Chip is an avid hockey player, snow skier and water skier. He loves to travel the world but lately spends most of his travel visiting his kids at Clemson, Tampa and Tennessee Universities.



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Karen J. Jerome Smith is originally from Brooklyn, New York and moved with her family to a suburb of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania as

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a child. She graduated with high honors from Pennsylvania State University, earning a Bachelor of Business Administration with a major in finance and a minor in economics. She attended law school at the Harrisburg campus of Widener University School of Law where she graduated *cum laude*. Upon graduating, Karen and her husband moved to Florida to escape the cold weather.

Early on her career, Karen practiced as a commercial litigator for a top tier international law firm where she handled a variety of issues relating to business and property litigation, including representation of Homeowner and Condominium Associations and their Board of Directors. Karen also has extensive experience in property insurance defense and worked as a Managing Attorney and in-house counsel for one of Florida's top insurance companies. Most recently prior to joining the firm, Karen had been focusing her practice on construction defect litigation.

Karen prides herself on her attention to detail and her thorough preparation for the matters she handles and her client-oriented focus. She has built her reputation based upon professionalism and candor and works diligently to bring matters to a prompt resolution and provide the best outcome for her clients.

During her time away from work, Karen enjoys playing trivia, traveling, cooking and spending time with her family.

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Geoffrey Marcus graduated from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia with a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Behavior Biology and a minor in Anthropology. Surprisingly, a single elective course shifted Geoffrey's path from the medical field to the legal field. Thus, Geoffrey continued his education at the University of Miami School of Law, graduating *Cum Laude* in 2019.

Upon graduating from law school, Geoffrey and his wife (who he met in law school) relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina. Geoffrey initially began his legal career at a Plaintiff firm that specializes in employment law and litigation. Thereafter, Geoffrey worked at a civil defense firm in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he handled civil litigation matters, involving the following: third

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party litigation, including employment law, OSHA investigations and citations, premises liability, vehicle accident defense, trucking defense, wrongful death, construction defects, and the defense of government and municipalities; and insurance coverage/first party litigation.

Geoffrey has represented, among others, a trillion dollar e-commerce company, a multi-billion dollar food and beverage supply company, a multi-million dollar hospitality business, and a multi-million dollar real estate development firm, as well as local health care providers and restaurants. He is experienced at managing all stages of litigation - pre-litigation through appellate work.

Notably, Geoffrey recently prevailed on summary judgment, which was later affirmed by the Fourth Circuit, after oral argument, pertaining to the issue of employer drug testing policy for new and current employees and an employer's related obligations under the ADA and N.C.G.S. § 95-28.2 (lawful use of lawful products statute) when an employee tested positive for THC use. *Anderson v. Diamondback Inv. Grp., LLC*, 117 F. 4th 165 (4th Cir. 2024).

In his personal life, Geoffrey enjoys spending time with his wife, Natasha, and embracing being a "girl dad" to his daughter, Olivia.



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Caroline grew up in Mount Laurel, New Jersey. She relocated to Florida to attend the University of Central Florida where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Upon graduating UCF, Caroline attended Barry University in Orlando and graduated *Cum Laude* with her *Juris Doctorate* degree. During law school, Caroline served as the Recruitment Chair on the executive board of *Phi Alpha Delta*, Law Fraternity, where she assisted in recruiting hundreds of new members.

After being admitted to the Florida Bar, Caroline joined Vernis & Bowling as an Associate Attorney. She focuses her practice in the areas of First and Third Party Property, Errors & Omissions Liability, Employment Law, and Director and Officer Liability. Caroline is a zealous advocate for her clients, which include various insurance carriers and residential and commercial associations.

When she is not working, Caroline enjoys traveling, trying out new restaurants, and spending time with her family.

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Mariel Weber was raised in Canoga Park, California. In 2010, she received her bachelor's degree in political science and a minor in economics, cum laude, from California State Northridge University. Mariel then pursued a *Juris Doctorate* at Florida Coastal School of Law, where she also earned a certification in Advanced Legal Research and Writing. Upon graduation, she was honored with the distinguished *pro bono* honors service award for her volunteer work at Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. Further expanding her expertise, Mariel secured a Master of Business Administration from the University of Florida.

Mariel went on to practice civil litigation with a specialty in federal consumer protection and foreclosure defense representing homeowners in all phases of litigation, including handing bench trials across the State of Florida. She then went on to serve as in-house counsel for a holding company for three years overseeing all legal aspects of the business by ensuring legal conformity, minimizing probability of exposure, and

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negotiating all joint ventures, reverse mergers, partnership and corporate financing agreements. Prior to joining Vernis & Bowling, Mariel also gained experience in insurance defense by representing carriers in property damage claims and personal injury protection litigation.

As a defense attorney, Mariel brings her passion for advocacy to every case. Her goal is clear: to provide confident, top-tier representation for her clients, while forging lasting relationships built on trust and outstanding legal outcomes.

Outside of work, Mariel enjoys playing tennis, golfing, snowboarding, and cherished moments with her family.