

Gary Zhao

Chicago, IL

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PARTNER

Overview

Gary is an accomplished litigator. He represents clients in high-stake and complex business litigation matters nationwide. A partner in the firm's Business Litigation Service Group, Gary has secured victories for his clients in cases involving breach of contract, intellectual property, false advertising, unfair competition, business fraud and other shareholder disputes. Gary also has significant experience defending clients who are subject to regulatory investigations undertaken by various state and federal government agencies, including, but not limited to, the US Department of Justice, Antitrust Division.

Gary grew up in China and is a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese. His understanding of the Chinese language and culture, coupled with his legal knowledge, allows him to serve as outside general counsel to several publicly traded and privately held Chinese companies and their subsidiaries in America.

Gary served as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA). He is a past president of the both the Chinese American Bar Association and the Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago. He was previously a co-chair of Amundsen Davis's Committee for Diversity and Inclusion and, in that role, was tasked with furthering diversity initiatives for the firm to help ensure that all employees feel appreciated for the diverse perspectives they bring to the table.

Experience

Defended a Farm Produce Client in Connection With Salmonella Outbreak

Obtained a Favorable Settlement for a Trust Beneficiary in a Declaratory Judgment Action to Determine Whether an Email Amendment to the Trust was Valid and Enforceable

SERVICES

Business Litigation

Electronic Discovery & Information Governance

Fiduciary, Trust & Probate Litigation

EDUCATION

Washington University in St. Louis School of Law, J.D., 2002

University of Michigan, B.A., 1999

ADMISSIONS

Illinois

Defended a Trust in a Breach of Fiduciary Duty and Breach of Confidentiality Agreement Involving a Closely Held LLC

Assisted Clients With an FDA Investigation and Voluntary Recall of a Food Additive Product

Represented a Restaurant Owner in a Shareholder Dispute

Handled the Motion to Vacate a Default Judgment Against an Indiana LLC

Defended a Company in the Cryptocurrency Industry that was Sued by its Former Business Advisors

Represented Out-of-State Clients in Judgment Debt Collection Cases

Successfully Vacated a \$500,000 Plus Default Judgment Entered Against a Health Care Company

Successfully Defended Claims of Copyright Infringement, Property Theft, and Breach of Contract Among Others After a Failed Merger Between Two Companies

Defended a Large Chemical Company Against Breach of Licensing Agreement, Breach of Fiduciary Duty, Promissory Fraud and Tortious Interference Claims

Membership & Involvement

- Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago: President 2019, President Elect 2018
- Past President: Chinese American Bar Association (CABA) of Greater Chicago 2012 - 2015
- Fellow: American Bar Foundation, inducted 2014
- Past Vice President and General Counsel: Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) Chicago, Pan-Asian Advocacy Organization
- National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA): Co-Chair, Litigation Committee, 2011-2016; At-Large Board of Governors, 2016-2018; Elected Treasurer, 2018-2019;
- Ambassador: American Bar Association's Business Law Section 2010 to 2012 (now Business Law Fellows)

Honors

- Selected to Crain's Chicago Business's Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys: 2023
- Selected as Asian American Bar Association Member of the Year, 2010
- Awarded the Presidential Leadership Award by The Chinese American Bar Association: 2015

- Received the Excellence in Law Award from the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA): 2015
- Selected to "Best Under 40" by the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association: 2015
- Recognized as "40 Illinois Attorney Under 40 to Watch" by the Law Bulletin in 2011
- Selected to "Best Under 40" by *Suburban Life Media*: 2015
- Selected to State Farm's Rising Star Academy: 2020 - 2021
- Selected to the Illinois Super Lawyers list: 2021, 2022, 2023
- Selected to the Illinois Super Lawyers "Rising Stars" list: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016
- Martindale-Hubbell AV® Preeminent™ rated

Firm News

Gary Zhao Selected as One of Crain's Chicago Business's Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys for 2023

Firm News, *Crain's Chicago Business*, March 13, 2023

Amundsen Davis Attorneys Included in the 2023 Illinois Super Lawyers and Rising Stars List

Firm News, *Amundsen Davis*, January 23, 2023

30 SmithAmundsen Attorneys Included on 2022 Illinois Super Lawyers and Rising Stars Lists

January 28, 2022

Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Presents Gary Zhao With Excellence in Civic Service Award

May 27, 2021

27 SmithAmundsen Attorneys Included on 2021 Illinois Super Lawyers and Rising Stars Lists

January 29, 2021

Gary Zhao Selected to Join State Farm's Rising Star Academy

October 2020

Chicago Bar Association Honors Gary Zhao with a 2018 Vanguard Award for Service

Firm News, *Chicago Bar Association*, April 24, 2018

SmithAmundsen Hosts a Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month

October 5, 2017

Gary Zhao

Gary Zhao Appointed to the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association's Board of Governors

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, November 5, 2016

28 SmithAmundsen Attorneys Included on 2016 Illinois Super Lawyers and 2016 Illinois Rising Stars Lists

SmithAmundsen, January 8, 2016

Suburban Life Media, the Chinese American Bar Association, and the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association Honor Gary Zhao in 2015

Suburban Life Media; Chinese American Bar Association; National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, August 2015

Illinois Super Lawyers & Illinois Rising Stars Names 26 SmithAmundsen Attorneys to 2015 List

January 12, 2015

Illinois Super Lawyers & Illinois Rising Stars Names 19 SmithAmundsen Attorneys to 2013 List

January 3, 2013

In the Media

Gary Zhao Featured in Thomson Reuter's *Legal Current* White Paper and Podcast Regarding the Advancement of Lawyers of Color

Gary Zhao Interviewed by the *Legal Executive Institute of Thomson Reuters* on Diverse Bar Associations

"Ins & Outs of Corporate, General and In-House Counsel," Gary Zhao Featured in *Chicago Lawyer Magazine*

Gary Zhao Featured in *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* Article About the Chinese American Bar Association's Record Growth

"Why Chicago Law Firms are Learning Mandarin" *Crain's Chicago Business* Quotes Gary Zhao

Mandarin Leader Features Gary Zhao

Speaking Engagements

Celebrate PRIDE With SmithAmundsen
Chicago, IL, June 27, 2019

Celebrate PRIDE With SmithAmundsen
SmithAmundsen Hosted It's Fourth Annual PRIDE Celebration
Brando's Speakeasy, June 21, 2017

SmithAmundsen and Chicago Taiwanese American Professionals Present Panel on Business Startups

SmithAmundsen, Taiwanese American Professionals, Seminar; Chicago, IL, November 17, 2016

Proactive Strategies to Minimize Electronic Discovery Pitfalls

National Conference of Vietnamese American Attorneys, Seminar; San Jose, CA, October 15, 2016

How to Use the Small Claims Court to Your Advantage

Asian American Bar Association, Seminar, Chicago, IL, September 10, 2016

Celebrate PRIDE With SmithAmundsen

June 23, 2016

SmithAmundsen Hosts Third Annual Black History Month Event

Park Hyatt, Chicago, IL, February 18, 2016

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