



William Smelko, Partner

Practice Areas	Appellate Law Services Restructuring and Bankruptcy Land Use Litigation, Corporate and Commercial Public Agency Insurance Recovery
Admissions	California
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Professional Summary

Bill brings more than thirty-five years of experience to his representation of clients in litigation, with an emphasis on business bankruptcy, restructuring and corporate governance disputes. Bill has successfully litigated all aspects of bankruptcy matters from both the creditor's and debtor's perspective. His practice also involves advising banks, credit unions and other financial institutions on a variety of bankruptcy related matters, including plan confirmation objections, asset disposition and use motions, stay relief litigation, lease disputes and the prosecution and defense of discharge objections and nondischargeability complaints. Bill has successfully argued a number of appeals before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and California's Fourth District Court of Appeal. Bill teaches Bankruptcy, Bankruptcy Procedure and Workouts, Collections & Foreclosures at the Thomas Jefferson School of Law while also coaching Thomas Jefferson's Bankruptcy Law Moot Court and Negotiation Teams.

Bill is an experienced federal and state court litigator with extensive experience in defending and prosecuting writs, due process violation claims and political challenges based upon both statutory and constitutional rights claims for relief. Most recently, in October 2016, Bill successfully defended the Ballot Statement Writ Challenge brought against the Proponents of Measure A in the San Diego Superior Court. In addition to his experience as a litigator in state and federal courts, Bill also served as a Member of the Board of Adjustment for the City of La Mesa directly evaluating challenges to various ordinance,



zoning and planning determinations made by the Board for project developments. Bill worked with public agencies and municipalities in connection with claims seeking reimbursement of insurance benefits and bankruptcy crossover related claims and defenses. Bill also prosecuted and defended class action litigation for private clients in state and federal court proceedings. As the Chief Legal Counselor for the past 37 years at the California Boys State Program, Bill annually revises and updates the Manual of California Government used in the Program to educate student delegates about state, county and municipal governance issues and concerns.

Bill is a member of [Procopio's COVID-19 Legal Resources Team](#).

Recognitions

- 2019 West Coast Top Rated Lawyers, ALM
- *Martindale-Hubbell® AV Preeminent®* Peer Review Rated Lawyer
- San Diego Magazine Top Lawyer, 2019 (Appellate)
- "Top Lawyers," *San Diego Magazine*, 2017-Present

Community

- American Legion's California Boy State Program – Chief Legal Counselor
- La Costa Canyon High School, Canyon Crest Academy and San Dieguito Academy – Policy Debate Coach
- University of California, Berkeley – Assistant Debate Coach
- University of Kentucky – Board Member, Tournament of Champions
- Former Past President & Member, La Mesa Rotary Club

Education

- JD, University of Michigan Law School, 1980 Bill received his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Michigan Law School, where he was a member of the Jessup Cup Moot Court Team and served as the Chief Justice of the University of Michigan Associated Student Body Court of Student Discipline
- H.D. Literature, with Honors (Anglo-Irish Literature), University of Dublin, Trinity College, 1976



- B.A., *Summa cum Laude*, Triple Major (American Government and Politics, Speech Communication, English Literature), University of Redlands, 1975

News Coverage

- York, Tom. "[Six Attorneys From San Diego Law Firm Procopio Elevated to Partner Status](#)," *Times of San Diego*, January 11, 2021.
- "[What Skills Do Students Need to be Future-Ready?](#)" *Education Week*, September 26, 2017

Seminars

- Co-presenter. "[How to Best Protect Yourself When a Customer Files Bankruptcy](#)," Podcast, August 24, 2020.
- Presenter. "[What Suppliers Should Know Before Their Key Customers File For Bankruptcy](#)," August 20, 2020.
- Presenter. "Business Restructuring Options for Turbulent Times," April 1, 2020.
- Presenter. "[Public Speaking for Lawyers: In Court and Out of Court](#)," (4-part series), Webinar, July 25, 2018.

Publications

- Author. "[3 Steps International Suppliers Should Take Now Before Their Key U.S. Customer Files For Bankruptcy](#)," August 5, 2020.
- Co-author. "[Business Assistance Funds Under The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, And Economic Security Act](#)," March 27, 2020.
- Author. "[3 Proactive Steps Lenders should Take in Light of a Recent Appellate Panel Ruling](#)," January 9, 2018.