

# Mel J. Garofalo

Of Counsel

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## Practices

Professional Liability  
Litigation

Products Liability  
Litigation

Pharmaceutical and  
Medical Device Litigation

Mass Tort Litigation

Retail, Restaurant, and  
Hospitality

Civil Litigation

Commercial Litigation

## Bar Admissions

North Carolina State Bar

U.S. Supreme Court

U.S. Court of Appeals,  
Fourth Circuit

U.S. District Courts,  
Eastern, Middle and  
Western Districts of North  
Carolina

## Education

J.D., Wake Forest  
University, 1978

B.A., University of Dayton,  
1975

## Overview

Mel Garofalo credits his success as a lawyer to the personal and professional relationships he has established over the course of his 47-year career, and he values those relationships more than anything. “The ability to treat people with respect, to relate to them on a personal level, and to communicate honestly and clearly is at the heart of how I have tried to live my life both on a personal and professional level,” he says.

Mel served as Hedrick Gardner’s managing partner from 1993 until 2015, and under his leadership, the firm grew from 2 offices with a total of 35 attorneys to 4 offices in two states with approximately 90 attorneys. He takes great pride in having mentored many of the firm’s younger attorneys over the years who have progressed and become partners in the firm.

Since 1978, Mel has tried more than 100 jury trials to verdict in both state and federal court and has handled over 40 appeals before the North Carolina Supreme Court, the North Carolina Court of Appeals and the United States Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Through his years of practice, Mel has handled a wide variety of complex civil litigation, including large, multi-party product liability actions, complex fire and explosion cases, drug and medical device litigation, premises liability and security litigation, liquor liability litigation as well as wrongful death and catastrophic personal injury litigation.

In January of 2024, Mel moved to an Of Counsel position at the firm. In that role, he continues to advise and consult with clients as well as helping mentor younger attorneys in the firm. He is certified as a Superior Court Mediator by the North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission, and he enjoys using his years of experience to help parties resolve their differences through the mediation process.

Mel is a member of the Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel (FDCC), an invitation-only organization consisting of accomplished defense attorneys, corporate counsel, and insurance industry executives who have achieved professional distinction during their careers. He currently serves as a Vice-Chair of the Admissions Committee. In 2012, 2015, 2023, and 2025, Best Lawyers named him the Charlotte Personal Injury Litigation Defendants' Lawyer of the Year. In 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2025, Best Lawyers named him the Lawyer of the Year in Product Liability Litigation in Charlotte.

Long active in the North Carolina Association of Defense Attorneys (NCADA), Mel served on the organization's board of directors and as president in 2005-2006. In June of 2023 the NCADA presented him with its J. Robert Elster Award for Professional Excellence. He chaired the North Carolina Defense Fund from 2007-2009 and participated on the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission from 2006-2007.

Mel and his wife of over 46 years have two adult children and four energetic grandsons. While not spending quality time with his family, Mel enjoys traveling, listening to music, golf and trying to exercise. He is an avid sports fan, cheering on the Carolina Panthers, Charlotte Hornets and, above all else, the New York Yankees.

## Experience

*Cases or matters referenced are for illustrative purposes only, and do not represent the lawyer's or law firm's entire record. Each case is unique and must be evaluated on its own merits. The outcome of a particular case cannot be predicted based upon a lawyer's or law firm's past results. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.*

- Successfully defended a private North Carolina University and its Director of Security in a wrongful death case involving alleged hazing and obtained a dismissal with prejudice pursuant to Rule 12(b)(6) on behalf of both clients. The dismissal was affirmed by the NC Court of Appeals and Discretionary Review was denied by the NC Supreme Court.
- Successfully defended a manufacturer of a pulse oximeter against allegations of product defect in a wrongful death case resulting in a favorable settlement for the client.
- Successfully defended a retail department store in a case involving an alleged brain injury in a child who was alleged to have been struck in the head by a piece of shelving. The case settled prior to jury selection for less than 6% of the original demand to settle the case.
- Successfully defended a large motion control and automation manufacturer in two of the largest civil law suits ever filed in North Carolina, involving catastrophic explosions at the West Pharmaceutical and ConAgra manufacturing plants. Both cases involved multiple wrongful death and catastrophic injury claims. In each case was able to establish that there was no viable theory of liability against the client, resulting in very nominal settlements in both cases.

## Awards & Honors

- Recipient of the North Carolina Association of Defense Attorneys J. Robert Elster Award, 2023
- Elected in the Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel in 2012
- Recognized by [Best Lawyers](#)® from 2011-2026 for Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants

- Recognized by [Best Lawyers®](#) from 2013-2026 for Products Liability – Defendants
- Selected for the *Best Lawyers®* Personal Injury – Defendants “Lawyer of the Year” in Charlotte in 2012, 2015, and 2023
- Selected as a *North Carolina Lawyers Weekly* Leader in the Law in 2012
- Named the *Best Lawyers®* Product Liability Litigation – Defendants “Lawyer of the Year” in Charlotte in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020
- Selected to the [North Carolina Super Lawyers®](#) list from 2006-2026
- Selected to the [North Carolina Super Lawyers®](#) Top 100 list, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, & 2019
- Selected to the [North Carolina Super Lawyers®](#) Charlotte Top 25 List in 2014 & 2015
- Recognized by *Business North Carolina* magazine as a [North Carolina Legal Elite](#) in 2011, 2013, and 2014
- Maintains an AV rating with [Martindale-Hubbell](#)
- Received DRI’s Exceptional Performance Citation in 2006

## Involvement

- Federation of Defense & Corporate Counsel
- North Carolina Association of Defense Attorneys
  - Immediate Past President (2006-2007)
  - President (2005-2006)
  - President-Elect (2004-2005)
  - Executive Vice President (2003-2004)
  - Secretary (2001-2002)
  - Member, Board of Directors (1998-2001)
- North Carolina Defense Fund
  - Chair (2007-2009)
- Mecklenburg County Bar Association