

People

Maria N. Vernace

Partner, Litigation

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Maria Vernace focuses her practice on business litigation at the trial and appellate levels in state and federal courts. Maria has significant experience in defending legal malpractice and malicious prosecution cases.

Notable Work

Legal Malpractice Litigation: Represented an Am Law 100 law firm and its prior attorney defending a malpractice claim arising from transactional legal work. Obtained summary judgment on statute of limitations grounds, which was *per curiam* affirmed in December 2024.

Florida's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act: Represented a defendant attorney against a RICO claim by a mobile home association arising from the sales transaction of the mobile home park. Secured dismissal of the claim at the pleading stage. Defendant attorney awarded entitlement to statutory attorney's fees and sanctions.

Malicious Prosecution Litigation: Represented an attorney and his law firm defending against a malicious prosecution and tagalong conspiracy claim. Obtained summary judgment for the attorney and his law firm by establishing probable cause existed for the attorney's actions taken while representing his client, which was affirmed on appeal. *Rivernider v. Meyer*, 174 So. 3d 602 (Fla. 4th DCA 2015).

Insurance Coverage Litigation: Represented a prior excess insurance carrier in an action by the subsequent excess insurance carrier that was seeking to avoid or shift responsibility for its share of a \$10 million settlement. Obtained a complete defense verdict after a two-plus-week 2018 jury trial. A confidential resolution was reached after the defense verdict, and no appeal was taken.

Related Professional Experience

Areas of Experience

Appellate
Litigation
Professional Liability
Commercial Disputes

Education

J.D., Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center, 2004, summa cum laude, *Nova Law Review*, Editor-in-Chief
B.A., Smith College, 1996

Admissions

Bars

Florida

Related Content

Akerman Expands Premier Litigation Practice With Top Professional Liability Lawyer David Keller and Elite Team
February 18, 2025

- Judicial Clerk to the Honorable Gary M. Farmer, Fourth District Court of Appeal, 2004-2005

Honors and Distinctions

- Martindale-Hubbell, AV Preeminent Rated
- *Super Lawyers* Magazine, 2010-2014, Listed in Florida as a “Rising Star” for Appellate, Business Litigation, Insurance Coverage
- *Miami Daily Business Review*, 2007 Most Effective Lawyers, International Law
- Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad Law Center, Family Law Book Award, 2004

Published Work and Lectures

- NBI Seminar, Author, “Effectively Resolving Disputes,” May 2006
- NBI Seminar, Author, “Avoid Complications When Filing Lien Claims or Notices,” February 2006
- 36 UWLA L. Rev. 274 , Author, “E-Mailing Service of Process: It’s a Shoe in!”