

John D. Bessler

OF COUNSEL

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Office: Minneapolis



John brings more than 30 years of legal experience, including in complex commercial litigation, to his diverse business litigation practice.

With a career spanning both private practice and academia, John brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his work.

John has extensive experience in civil litigation, representing clients across a range of industries in matters involving class actions, construction, contracts, employment, insurance, and torts. He has handled multimillion dollar commercial litigation disputes and appeared in federal and state courts as well as administrative proceedings. Earlier in his career, John worked at AmLaw 50, AmLaw 100 and AmLaw 200 firms and maintained a robust business litigation practice.

Beyond his legal practice, John is a [law professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law](#), an adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, and a visiting scholar at the University of Minnesota Law School. He has taught a wide array of courses covering a variety of topics, including administrative law, antitrust, capital punishment, civil procedure, comparative criminal law, contracts, international human rights law, legal research and writing, and torts.

PRACTICES & INDUSTRIES

Business Litigation

Class Action

ADMISSIONS

District of Columbia

Minnesota

U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

U.S. Supreme Court

EDUCATION

Indiana University Bloomington, J.D. *cum laude*

Hamline University, M.F.A

University of Minnesota, B.A.

University of Oxford, M.ST.

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In addition to his presence in Minneapolis, John maintains an office in Washington, DC.

EXPERIENCE

Represented broker in action against insurer to recover under fidelity bond.

Advised individuals and small and large businesses across a range of litigated matters and industries.

Defended clients in complex commercial litigation and arbitration matters.

Counseled corporate client in high-profile case over television broadcast rights for professional sports team.

Served as counsel in multimillion dollar reinsurance dispute.

RECOGNITIONS

John's contributions to legal scholarship have earned him numerous accolades, with recognitions for his authored books spanning from 1998 to the present day. His notable honors include:

Regents' Faculty Award for Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity, University System of Maryland Board of Regents, 2018

Winner, Next Generation Indie Book Award (Autobiography/Biography), 2018

First Prize, Scribes Book Award, 2015

First Prize, American Association for Italian Studies Book Award, 2015

Gold Winner, IndieFab Book of the Year Award, 2015

Winner, *Independent Publisher* Book Award, 2008

PROFESSIONAL & CIVIC ACTIVITIES

The American Law Institute

Advisory Board Member, Jack Mason Law & Democracy Initiative, Books for Africa

PUBLICATIONS

John has built a distinguished career in legal scholarship and is recognized internationally for his expertise. He has authored multiple books, contributed chapters to several legal texts and published numerous law review articles. His writing primarily focuses on capital punishment and the history and foundation of

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American law. He edited Justice Stephen Breyer's book, *Against the Death Penalty*, and he has also written extensively about the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria, the Italian Enlightenment and the American Revolution, and criminal justice issues. John's most recent work includes:

BOOKS

The Death Penalty's Denial of Fundamental Human Rights: International Law, State Practice, and the Emerging Abolitionist Norm, Cambridge University Press, 2023

Private Prosecution in America: Its Origins, History, and Unconstitutionality in the Twenty-First Century, Carolina Academic Press, 2022

The Baron and the Marquis: Liberty, Tyranny, and the Enlightenment Maxim that Can Remake American Criminal Justice, Carolina Academic Press, 2019

The Celebrated Marquis: An Italian Noble and the Making of the Modern World, Carolina Academic Press, 2018

The Death Penalty as Torture: From the Dark Ages to Abolition, Carolina Academic Press, 2017

BOOK CHAPTERS

"What-Ifs and Missed Opportunities: The U.S. Supreme Court, Death Sentences and Executions, and the Fiftieth Anniversary of *Furman v. Georgia*," in *Death Penalty in Decline?: The Fight against Capital Punishment in the Decades since Furman v. Georgia* (Austin Sarat, ed.), pp. 21-63, Temple University Press, 2024

"The Philosophy of Punishment and the Arc of Penal Reform: From Ancient Lawgivers to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and through the Nineteenth Century," in *The Palgrave Handbook on the Philosophy of Punishment* (Matthew Altman, ed.), pp. 23-52, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023

"A Tandem Bicycle: The Rule of Law and the Protection of Human Rights," in *Rule of Law: Cases, Strategies, and Interpretations* (Barbara Faedda, ed.), pp. 19-34, Ronzani S.r.l., 2021

"From the Founding to the Present: An Overview of Legal Thought and the Eighth Amendment's Evolution," in *The Eighth Amendment and Its Future in a New Age of Punishment* (William W. Berry III & Meghan Ryan, eds.), pp. 11-27, Cambridge University Press, 2020

"The American Death Penalty: A Short (But Long) History," in *Routledge Handbook on Capital Punishment* (Robert M. Bohm & Gavin Lee, eds.), pp. 5-29, Routledge, 2017

"Beccaria in America: How the Italian Enlightenment Shaped American Law," in *Alle radici del diritto penale moderno: l'illuminismo giuridico di Cesare Beccaria di fronte al potere di punire* (Lorenzo Picotti, ed.), pp. 99-114, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2015

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"Cesare Beccaria et les débuts de la réforme pénale américaine," in *Cesare Beccaria, la controverse pénale, XVIIIème-XXIème siècles* (Michel Porret & Elisabeth Salvi, eds.), Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015

"The American Enlightenment: Eliminating Capital Punishment in the United States," in *Capital Punishment: A Hazard to a Sustainable Criminal Justice System?* (Lill Scherdin, ed.), Ashgate, 2014; Routledge, 2016

"Capital Punishment Law and Practices: History, Trends, and Developments," in *America's Experiment with Capital Punishment: Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of the Ultimate Penal Sanction* (James R. Acker, Robert M. Bohm and Charles S. Lanier, eds.), pp. 19-38, Carolina Academic Press, 2014

LAW REVIEW ARTICLES

"Mr. Antitrust: A Celebration of Professor Robert Lande's Career," *University of Baltimore Law Review*, 2024

"The Gross Injustices of Capital Punishment: A Torturous Practice and Justice Thurgood Marshall's Astute Appraisal of the Death Penalty's Cruelty, Discriminatory Use, and Unconstitutionality," *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice*, 2023

"The Rule of Law: A Necessary Pillar of Free and Democratic Societies for Protecting Human Rights," *Santa Clara Law Review*, 2021

"A Century in the Making: The Glorious Revolution, the American Revolution, and the Origins of the U.S. Constitution's Eighth Amendment," *William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal*, 2019

"The Marquis Beccaria: An Italian Penal Reformer's Meteoric Rise in the British Isles in the Transatlantic Republic of Letters," *Diciottesimo Secolo*, 2019

(Response) "*Bucklew v. Precythe*: The Supreme Court's Tortured Death Penalty Jurisprudence," *The George Washington Law Review*, 2019

"Taking Psychological Torture Seriously: The Torturous Nature of Credible Death Threats and the Collateral Consequences for Capital Punishment," *Northeastern University Law Review*, 2019

"Torture and Trauma: Why the Death Penalty Is Wrong and Should Be Strictly Prohibited by American and International Law," *Washburn Law Journal*, 2019

"The Long March Toward Abolition: From the Enlightenment to the United Nations and the Death Penalty's Slow Demise," *University of Florida Journal of Law & Public Policy*, 2018

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"The Abolitionist Movement Comes of Age: From Capital Punishment as a Lawful Sanction to a Peremptory, International Law Norm Barring Executions," *Montana Law Review*, 2028

"The Concept of "Unusual Punishments" in Anglo-American Law: The Death Penalty as Arbitrary, Discriminatory, and Cruel and Unusual," *Northeastern Journal of Law & Social Policy*, 2018

"What I Think About When I Think About the Death Penalty," *Saint Louis University Law Journal*, 2018

"The Law's Evolution: From Medieval Executions to a Peremptory, International Law Norm Against Capital Punishment," *Beccaria III*, 2017

"The Italian Enlightenment and the American Revolution: Cesare Beccaria's Forgotten Influence on American Law," *Mitchell Hamline Law Journal of Public Policy and Practice*, 2016

"The Inequality of America's Death Penalty: A Crossroads for Capital Punishment at the Intersection of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments," *Washington and Lee Law Review Online*, 2016

"The Economist and the Enlightenment: How Cesare Beccaria Changed Western Civilization," *European Journal of Law and Economics*, 2016