

## WALTER F. KAWALEC III

SHAREHOLDER

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### AREAS OF PRACTICE

Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial  
Practice  
Public Entity & Civil Rights  
Litigation  
Insurance Services - Coverage &  
Bad Faith Litigation

### CONTACT INFO

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## OVERVIEW

### ADMISSIONS

Pennsylvania  
1998

U.S. Court of Appeals 3rd  
Circuit  
1999

New Jersey  
2002

U.S. Supreme Court  
2002

U.S. District Court Eastern  
District of Pennsylvania  
2002

U.S. District Court District  
of New Jersey  
2002

U.S. Court of Appeals 4th  
Circuit  
2017

Walt focuses the majority of his practice on post-trial appellate advocacy with particular emphasis in the areas of public entity liability and civil rights, insurance coverage/bad faith litigation and professional liability. He has handled several hundred appeals to date, many of which have been in representation of physicians and attorneys, in appeals connected with malpractice litigation.

In his capacity as an appellate attorney, Walt has developed extensive experience briefing and arguing cases before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the Supreme Courts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Pennsylvania's intermediate appellate courts, the Superior Court and Commonwealth Court, and New Jersey's intermediate court, the Appellate Division. As well, Walt has experience, thus far, up to the petition stage before the United States Supreme Court.

In addition to Walt's involvement in the appellate courts, he has also briefed and argued cases and motions before the Pennsylvania Board of Finance and Revenue, the Pennsylvania Courts of Common Pleas, and the New Jersey Superior Court Law Division.

Walt is a graduate of Glassboro State College and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, where he earned his *juris doctor, cum laude*, in 1998. He was the recipient of the Dean's Scholarship for three years, first year moot court competition award for "Best Brief," and served as an officer in Phi Alpha Delta legal fraternity.

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### EDUCATION

University of Pittsburgh  
School of Law (J.D., cum  
laude, 1998)

Rowan University (B.A.,  
1991)

In 1999 Walt joined Marshall Dennehey as a member of the Appellate Group. Since that time, he has developed an proficiency in all aspects of appellate law, from legal research, brief writing and other written advocacy to oral argument, and appellate-level motion practice.

Walt's published opinions in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the Third Circuit Court of Appeals have established and clarified important legal principles on subjects ranging from insurance coverage and remittitur, to informed consent claims in medical malpractice actions, and contributory negligence in accountant malpractice cases.

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### YEAR JOINED

1999

From 2002 to 2011, Walt also worked as the editor of *Defense Digest* —Marshall Dennehey's quarterly newsletter that updates our clients on important legal cases and issues of the day.

# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

## Reconsidering Reconsideration

**Mount Laurel**

**Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial Practice**

**December 1, 2021**

Key Points: Defense Digest, Vol. 27, No. 5, December 2021 is prepared by Marshall Dennehey Warner Coleman & Goggin to provide information on recent legal developments of interest to our readers.

### **PUBLISHED WORKS**

"Reconsidering Reconsideration," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 27, No. 5, December 2021

"*Walters v. YMCA*, Putting Some Limitations on *Stelluti v. Casapenn*," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 2014

"De Facto Appeals Eliminate Federal Jurisdiction," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2004

"Pennsylvania Superior Court Rejects Request To Void Stacked Coverage," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2004

"'Advertising Injury' in the Third Circuit: A Frog Switch and a Green Machine," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2003

"An Injury Is Not An 'Injury' If The Pain Is Non-Compensable," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002

"Superior Court, S.I.R.'s and the Direct Action Statute: Contracts Rule, Penna. Bar Ass'n, Civil Litigation Newsletter," orig. published in the *Defense Digest*, 2002

"Pennsylvania Appellate News," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2001

"Appellate Courts Refine Pennsylvania Settlement Law," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2000

"Pennsylvania Appellate News," *Defense Digest*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1999

## RESULTS

### Successfully Overturned \$1.8 Million Judgment on Appeal in New Jersey

**Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial Practice**

**Insurance Services - Coverage & Bad Faith Litigation**

**July 11, 2025**

We successfully overturned a \$1.8 million judgment on appeal in a case that involved the *Laidlow* exclusion in a workers' compensation/employers liability policy. The decedent succumbed to heat exhaustion while at work, and the plaintiff alleged the death was due to working conditions the employer knew were substantially certain to lead to injury. Our client, the insurer, offered to defend the employer, but only to the extent of obtaining dismissal of the workers' compensation claim, which was filed in the wrong forum.

### Favorable Decision Obtained from the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

**Public Entity & Civil Rights Litigation**

**Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial Practice**

**January 9, 2025**

We received a favorable decision from the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in a First Amendment case. The circuit court affirmed the District of New Jersey's denial of a preliminary injunction in which the plaintiff claimed that federal and local officials violated her First Amendment rights through censorship and retaliation after she posted comments on Facebook.

### Successful Representation of National Home Improvement Corporation's Tool & Truck Rental Division

**Product Liability**

**Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial Practice**

**General Liability**

**July 23, 2024**

Marshall Dennehey's trial and appellate attorneys were successful in their representation of a national home improvement retail corporation's tool and truck rental division. Handling the case at both the trial and appellate levels, the defense was successful in convincing the New Jersey appellate court to affirm the trial court's decision on July 23, 2024. At the trial level, the judge granted our motion for a directed verdict and dismissed the case. The plaintiff had rented a flatbed truck in 2018 to move a cabinet he had just purchased.

## Summary Judgment Secured in a Complex Medical Malpractice Case

### **Health Care Liability**

**May 2, 2024**

We obtained summary judgment on behalf of an obstetrician in a medical malpractice action. The plaintiff alleged that our client did not obtain the requisite informed consent from the plaintiff to undergo a trial of labor after having two prior cesarean section deliveries (TOLAC x2). The court found that the plaintiff's lack of informed consent claim was without foundation as she had an awareness of the risks of TOLAC x2.

## Summary Judgment Secured in a Racial and Sex-Based Discrimination Employment Case

### **Public Entity & Civil Rights Litigation**

### **Appellate Advocacy & Post-Trial Practice**

**September 7, 2023**

We obtained summary judgment in an employment litigation case involving claims of racial and sex-based discrimination. The plaintiff alleged that she experienced a hostile work environment based solely on her race. We were able to prove that there was no evidence to substantiate these claims.

## **SIGNIFICANT REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS**

Obtained summary judgment on behalf of an obstetrician in a medical malpractice action. The plaintiff alleged that our client did not obtain the requisite informed consent from our client to undergo a trial of labor after having two prior cesarean section deliveries (“TOLAC x2”). The court found that the plaintiff’s lack of informed consent claim was without foundation as she had an awareness of the risks of TOLAC x2. Rather, the court found that her claim was premised on the assertion that the physician performing the TOLAC x2 failed to convert the TOLAC to a C-section quickly enough when complications arose. The court held that as matter of law our client had no obligation to discuss the risk that the doctor in the delivery room may wait too long to pivot to a C-section, which was the actual cause of the plaintiff’s alleged harm.

Successfully defended a grant of summary judgment in the New Jersey Appellate Division that resulted in a published opinion. Our clients were the owner and manager of an apartment complex for seniors. The plaintiff resident had returned from walking her dog and alleged she received injuries entering the elevator. She had allowed the dog to enter first, when the doors began to close. She alleged injuries occurring when the right door struck her arm, and when she used her left arm and left side of her body to slow the doors from closing while she leapt into the elevator.

She sued our clients and the company hired to maintain the elevator, but was unable to establish any proof of negligence. The trial judge dismissed the case, declining to apply the doctrine of *res ipsa loquitur*, in part, because the plaintiff could not establish the third element of the doctrine: that the injury did not result from the plaintiff’s own voluntary act or neglect. On appeal, the plaintiff argued that the Appellate Division should eliminate this third element. The Appellate Division, in a published opinion, concluded that the third element is a well-established law in New Jersey and only the New Jersey Supreme Court could eliminate it, and that court has shown no inclination to do so. Because the plaintiff could not demonstrate the third prong, *res ipsa* was not applicable and the failure of the plaintiff to establish negligence resulted in summary judgment in the defendants’ favor.

Successfully argued to the New Jersey Supreme Court that the grant of a new trial by the Appellate Division in medical malpractice action was erroneous, as the plaintiff failed to object to the matter at trial and could

not establish plain error.

Successfully argued to the US District Court and Third Circuit Court of Appeals that a municipalities decision close a property to the public during the removal of a significant amount of buried military ordinance did not constitute a constitutional violation or takings.

Successfully argued that the represented municipality enacted a valid regulatory ordinance and not an improper licensing ordinance notwithstanding the use of the term "license" in the ordinance.

Successfully briefed arbitration argument and achieved a defense result in multi-million dollar binding arbitration in construction defect case.

Successfully persuaded the Appellate Division to reinstate multi-million dollar complaint dismissed in the Law Division.

Successfully argued for the reversal of a dismissal of the insurance carrier's fraud complaint, which clarified the operation of the entire controversy doctrine in New Jersey.

Successfully argued that a minor deviation on the form for rejecting the stacked limits for UIM coverage was not enough to vitiate the policyholder's rejection of stacked coverage.

Successfully argued that a trial court committed reversible error when, after the Appellate Division found the verdict to be excessive and remanded the case for remittitur, remitted the verdict by one cent.

Successfully argued that parties who were found guilty of criminal tax evasion were estopped from denying their contributory negligence in a civil suit against their accountant, stemming from the preparation of those income tax returns.

Successfully argued that the term "advertising injury" in policy was limited to claims arising out of the misappropriation of advertising ideas or style of doing business.

Successfully argued that a plaintiff who was successful against a carrier's policyholder has no claim against the carrier for the amount of the self-insured retention of the policyholder.

## REPRESENTATIVE CASES

*T.L. v. Goldberg*, N.J., A-11-18 (N.J. 2019)

*Cona v. Tp. of Wash.*, 456 N.J. Super. 197, 201 (N.J. App. Div. 2018)

*Estate of Brust v. ACF Industries, LLC*, 443 N.J. Super. 103 (N.J. App. Div. 2015)

*Bermudez v. Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation*, 439 N.J. Super. 45 (N.J. App. Div. 2015)

*Nat'l Amusements, Inc. v. Borough of Palmyra*, 716 F.3d 57 (3d Cir. 2013)

*Manahawkin Convalescent v. O'Neill*, 217 N.J. 99 (N.J. 2014)

*EEOC v. Geo Group, Inc.*, 616 F.3d 265 (3rd Cir. 2010)

*Biber Partnership, P.C. v. Diamond Hill Joint Venture, LLC*, 404 N.J. Super. 96 (App. Div. 2008)

*Allstate New Jersey Ins. Co. v. Cherry Hill Pain & Rehab. Institute*, 389 N.J. Super. 130 (App.Div 2006)

*Marran v. Marran*, 376 F.3d 143 (3d Cir. 2004)

*Vosk v. Encompass Ins. Co.*, 851 A.2d 162 (Pa. Super. 2004)

*Columbia Med. Group, Inc. v. Herring & Roll, P.C.*, 829 A.2d 1184 (Pa. Super. 2003)

*Tomaino v. Burman*, 364 N.J. Super. 224 (App. Div. 2003)

*Green Machine v. Zurich-American Ins. Co.*, 313 F.3d 837 (3d Cir. 2002)

*Hohns v. Gain*, 806 A.2d 16 (Pa. Super. 2002)

*Kleban v. National Union Fire Insurance Co.*, 771 A.2d 39 (Pa. Super. 2001)

*Miller v. Sacred Heart Hospital*, 753 A.2d 829 (Pa. Super. 2000)