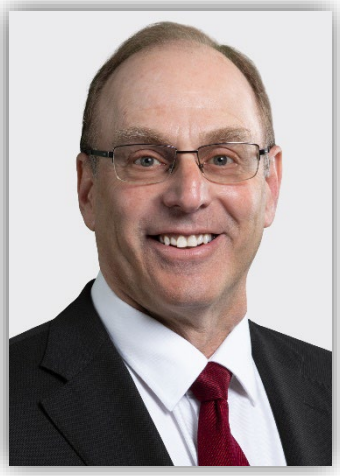
Ronald S. Safer

Partner

Direct: 312.471.8736 **Email:** rsafer@rshc-law.com



Ronald Safer manages complex, bet the company cases with a focus in civil litigation.

Ron has successfully represented companies and individuals in federal and state court involving matters such as commercial disputes, accounting fraud, tax fraud, anti-kickback violations, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), environmental violations, and securities fraud. He represents clients before the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and numerous state agencies.

When Ron takes a case, he pores over the facts and analyzes the complex concepts involved until he can shape them into clear, effective arguments. His impressive track record demonstrates his ability to command a courtroom while maintaining an unflinching commitment to his clients. Above all else, he genuinely cares about his work. “My clients’ problems become my problems,” he says.

His vast federal and state trial experience, paired with his unwavering work ethic and approachable demeanor, allows Ron to bring extraordinary value to his clients.

Previous Experience

In 1989, Ron joined the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Chicago and rose to Chief of the Criminal Division, successfully prosecuting more than one hundred defendants during his tenure. He prosecuted cases ranging from complex financial frauds and public corruption to sophisticated continuing criminal enterprises. He conducted dozens of jury trials and argued many significant cases to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

In 1999, Ron returned to private practice with a Chicago-based national law firm. He served as managing partner from 2005-2015.

EXPERIENCE

Clerkships

Hon. Thomas A. Flannery, U.S. District Court, District of Columbia (1983–1984)

Civil Litigation

Ron has represented corporations and individuals before numerous state and federal courts and agencies in a range of matters.

Representative Engagements

- Obtained a defense judgment for international insurance company against a $2.5 billion bad faith failure to settle claim.

- Successfully pursued civil claims in litigation across the nation stopping one firm from poaching employees and tortiously interfering with contracts and business relationships.
- Obtained largest verdict – $25.2 million – in the Northern District of Illinois for a single plaintiff in claims related to a wrongful conviction.
- Obtaining a jury verdict in favor of a major national bank, in a matter alleging the bank had tortiously interfered with an investment company's agreement to buy a futures commission merchant. The plaintiff claimed damages exceeding $200 million. The jury returned a defense verdict and awarded the bank more than $1.1 million on a counterclaim that sought $1 million.
- Representing a property owner in a jury trial arising from contribution claims with respect to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act. Hundreds of millions of dollars were at stake, but the jury ruled in favor of Ron's client.
- Representing a public company in arbitration where Ron's client was accused of breach of a distributorship contract and fraud. The plaintiff claimed damages of tens of millions of dollars. The arbitrators found for Ron's client and awarded nothing to the plaintiff.
- Obtaining an eight-figure settlement for a major retail chain in civil Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and indemnity agreement claims litigation involving a manufacturer of its products.
- Obtaining a nationwide injunction against the United States Attorney General and his attempt to condition receipt of grant funds on violating its Welcoming City Ordinance.

Criminal Defense

As an accomplished defense lawyer, Ron is able to help clients fight the odds against them in criminal prosecutions. He helps corporations and individuals alike avoid criminal prosecution.

Representative Engagements

- Obtained acquittal of Attorney accused of bankruptcy, mail and wire fraud after federal jury trial.
- Obtained acquittal of Professor accused of mail and wire fraud after federal jury trial.
- Convincing the U.S. Department of Justice not to file criminal charges against a trading company investigated for alleged market manipulation.
- Convincing the government not to charge a multinational company alleged to have bribed officials to obtain contracts.
- Convincing the government not to charge the CFO of a public company in alleged accounting fraud.
- Convincing the government not to charge a paving company in fraud investigation.
- Representing Mark S. Kipnis, a co-defendant in the highly publicized *United States v. Conrad Black, et. al.* case. Mr. Kipnis was the only defendant in this case who did not spend a single day in prison.
- Representing P. Nicholas Hurtgen, a former Senior Managing Director of Bear Stearns & Co., indicted for allegedly aiding and abetting a scheme to extort Edward Hospital. All seven counts against Mr. Hurtgen were eventually dismissed.

Internal Investigations

Ron's experience as a federal prosecutor, coupled with his accomplishments in his former firm's White Collar Crime and Corporate Compliance Group, position him as a skilled and effective leader of internal investigations for his clients.

Representative Engagements

- A provider of services to a large network of assisted living facilities was the victim of malfeasance by its CEO, COO and CFO. The scope of the damage was quickly determined, the involved personnel terminated, and the money lost was recovered from the wrong-doers.
- The Audit Committee of the Board of Directors of a publicly held company in investigating alleged violations of the corporation's travel and entertainment policy by a senior corporate officer.
- A multinational corporation in assessing whether foreign employees had violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.
- A publicly held corporation in investigating whether the corporation illegally manipulated futures markets.
- A public school system in assessing whether the school principal acted inappropriately.

Labor and Employment

Ron has substantial experience litigating labor and employment claims, including enforcing non-competition, inevitable disclosure of trade secrets, discrimination, and related matters.

Representative Engagements

- After evidentiary hearing, obtained a preliminary injunction against a former high-level employee who sought to join a competitor and inevitably use trade secrets.
- Obtaining a verdict in favor of a major financial institution in a claim that it discriminated against a high-level employee.
- Obtaining a jury verdict in favor of the City of Chicago in a claim that it discriminated against a city employee.

CREDENTIALS

Education

Georgetown University Law Center, J.D., 1983, *magna cum laude*
University of Pennsylvania, B.A., Economics, 1979, Wharton School, History - Faculty of Arts and Sciences, *cum laude*

Bar Admissions

Illinois
U.S. Supreme Court
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois
U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois
U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois (Trial Bar)
U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan
U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri

Professional Memberships

American College of Trial Lawyers, Distinguished Fellow

Honors & Awards

Ranked by Chambers as a Band 1 Lawyer in Litigation, White-Collar Crime and Government Investigations. Sought out for his expertise in handling and conducting high-stakes cases, with a strong focus on issues such as tax and securities fraud and FCPA violations. Interviewees say the "outstanding" Ronald Safer concentrates on representing clients in litigation. Well recognized within the state, he is particularly revered for his work representing corporations and individual clients in matters including high stakes litigation, accounting, tax, and securities fraud.

The Best Lawyers in America
Best Lawyers® (Bet-The-Company Litigation, 2017-2027; Commercial Litigation, 2025-2027; Criminal Defense: White-Collar, 2009-2027)

Chambers USA
Chambers & Partners (2006-2009, 2011-2026)

Legal 500 Chicago Elite
Legal 500 White Collar Crime (2026)

Bloomberg Law Unrivaled
Bloomberg Law (2026)

Chicago's Notable Leaders in Accounting, Consulting & Law
Crain's Chicago Business (2024)

Chicago's Notable Litigators & Trial Attorneys
Crain's Chicago Business (2023)

20 Most Inspiring Chicagoans
StreetWise Inc. (2018)

Justice John Paul Stevens Award 2017
Chicago Bar Association and Chicago Bar Foundation

2017 Chicago Criminal Defense: White-Collar "Lawyer of the Year"
Best Lawyers®

Illinois Top 250 Leading Lawyers in Illinois
Law Bulletin Media Leading Lawyers (2026)

Illinois Leading Lawyer
Law Bulletin Media Leading Lawyers (2003-2026)

Top 10 Leading White Collar Criminal Defense Lawyers
Law Bulletin Media Leading Lawyers (2014-2020)

Top 100 Leading Business Lawyers
Law Bulletin Media Leading Lawyers (2009-2020)

Illinois Super Lawyers
Thomson Reuters (2005-2026)

Top 100 Illinois Super Lawyers
Thomson Reuters (2008-2011, 2014-2017, 2019-2026)

Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America
Lawdragon Inc. (2023-2027)

Lawdragon Hall of Fame
Lawdragon Inc. (2022)

Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America
Lawdragon Inc. (2019-2021)

Top Rated Litigators
Martindale-Hubbell and ALM (2018-2021)

Who's Who Legal
Law Business Research Ltd. (Business Crime Defense, 2013-2019)

Client Service All-Star
BTI Consulting Group (2014-2015)

Volunteer of the Year
Uhlich Children's Advantage Network (2014)

Litigation Star
Euromoney's Benchmark Litigation (2009-2013)

Who's Who in Chicago Business 2012
Law, Crain's Chicago Business

Honored by the Center on Wrongful Convictions
For His Dedication to the Julie Rea Harper Case

Who's Who Legal Illinois
Law Business Research Ltd. (2007-2008)

Peer Reviewed AV® Preeminent™
Martindale-Hubbell (Since 1997)

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

"Bankruptcy Crime Referrals Rarely Result in Prosecutions," (interviewee) *Bloomberg Law* (August 7, 2025)

"Bad Faith Voir Dire is Here," (co-panelist) *DRI Insurance Coverage and Claims Institute*, Chicago IL (March 10, 2023)

"The FTC's Proposed Rule Banning Non-Competes: What Companies Need to Know," (co-panelist) Perrin Conferences Webinar Sponsored by RSHC (February 7, 2023)

Hall of Fame Limelight: Ron Safer, *Lawdragon* (July 14, 2022)

"Taking a new type of case brings $25M result," (interviewee) *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (December 9, 2021)

"Wrongful Conviction with Jason Flom – Kristine Bunch," (co-narrator) *The Wrongful Conviction Podcasts with Jason Flom* (August 31, 2020)

"Public Weighs in on Proposed Police Consent Decree. What's In It?," (interviewee) *WTTW Chicago Tonight*, Chicago, IL (October 23, 2018)

"Commentary: Jeff Sessions is wrong about Chicago's consent decree," (author) *Chicago Tribune* (October 22, 2018)

"The Need for Forensic Science Reform and How to Get There," (co-panelist) Center for Wrongful Convictions (CWC) Spring CLE Symposium, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, Chicago, IL (March 16, 2018)

Ron has lectured for the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on various subjects, including the use of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), complex financial frauds, and numerous areas of trial practice.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Pro Bono Activities

After working at the U.S. Attorney's Office for ten years, Ron returned to private practice with the goal of making pro bono service an even more essential feature of his firm. He has participated in the exoneration of individuals who had been wrongfully convicted and imprisoned, including:

- Arthur Brown was convicted of a double murder and arson and sentenced to life in prison based solely on a confession he gave after being beaten and choked by police officers. Ron and his team unraveled the State's case and convinced the Judge to vacate Arthur's conviction.
- Eddie Bolden was convicted of a double homicide despite being innocent of those crimes. Ron obtained relief from the Court of Appeals and the trial court in reversing Mr. Bolden's convictions.
- Bernard Williams was convicted of murder and served nearly two decades in prison for a crime he did not commit. The only evidence against him was the testimony of a notorious Chicago Police Department Detective who manufactured a confession from Bernard. After a jury trial, Bernard was acquitted and freed after years of wrongful incarceration.
- Christopher Coleman had been incarcerated for almost 20 years for crimes he did not commit. After Chris received a new trial, Ron led a team that persuaded the State to dismiss the charges. Ron also led the team that obtained a Certificate of Innocence for Chris in a contested hearing.
- Charles Johnson was convicted of a double murder he did not commit. Ron was part of a team that convinced the State Charles was innocent and to drop its prosecution of him.
- Jonathan Barr was exonerated by DNA evidence of a murder for which he spent nearly 20 years behind bars. Ron represented Mr. Barr against a charge that he committed another offense while awaiting trial for that wrongful conviction. A Cook County court granted the State's *nolle prosequi* motion and dismissed all criminal charges pending against Mr. Barr.
- Kristine Bunch, a mother wrongfully convicted in 1996 of murdering her 3-year-old son, who died when their mobile home burned in an accidental, electrical fire. In 2012, Ron convinced the Indiana Court of Appeals to reverse her conviction. Ms. Bunch was released on bond, and the State decided not to re-try her.

- Bennie Starks, a man sentenced to 60 years in prison for criminal sexual assault and aggravated battery despite dubious evidence. Mr. Starks was eventually freed after proper analysis of DNA evidence, and he is now free from further prosecution thanks to two separate Appellate Court victories briefed and argued by Ron.
- Julie Rea Harper, a mother wrongfully indicted in 2000 for the murder of her 10-year-old son. Ron represented Ms. Rea in her 2006 retrial, in which the jury found her not guilty.

Civic and Charitable Memberships

The Commercial Club of Chicago
FISK University, Board of Trustees
UCAN, President's Board