JONES
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# Joanne M. O'Connor

## Shareholder & Board Member

Florida Bar Board Certified
Business Litigation Attorney



### Contact

joconnor@jonesfoster.com
561 650 0498

### Location

505 South Flagler Drive
Suite 1100
West Palm Beach
Florida 33401

### Education

J.D., Tulane University, *summa cum laude*

M.A., University of Florida

A.B., Duke University, *cum laude*

### Admissions

The Florida Bar
U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit
U.S. District Court, Northern District of Florida
U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida
U.S. District Court, Middle District of Florida
U.S. Supreme Court

Joanne O'Connor, a Jones Foster board member, is a Florida Bar Board Certified specialist in Business Litigation who represents businesses and individuals and focuses her practice on complex commercial litigation (such as contracts, business torts, and partnership and corporate disputes) and real estate and land use litigation. Joanne defends actions seeking certification of nationwide and statewide classes, including consumer claims brought under the federal Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA). Joanne's extensive experience as a litigator positions her as a powerful advocate for her clients in jury and non-jury trials and appeals in state and federal courts and before private arbitration panels. She also provides expert testimony to state and federal courts on the reasonableness and amount of attorneys' fees and costs due to prevailing parties.

Joanne serves as Town Attorney for the Town of Palm Beach where she counsels the Town, its officials, and staff on a wide range of legal issues including contracts, land use and zoning, ordinances, and regulations, and oversees the Town's litigation. She also counsels other governmental entities on statutory, constitutional, and civil rights claims and both governmental and private entities on Florida's Public Records Act and Sunshine Law.

Joanne has held numerous leadership roles in the legal community and was most recently appointed by the Chief Judge of the 15th Judicial Circuit Court to the inaugural Local Professionalism Panel. She previously served as vice chair of The Florida Bar's Federal Court Practice Committee, chair and member of the Business Litigation Certification Committee, and president of the Federal Bar Association Palm Beach County Chapter, a voluntary bar organization that fosters communication between the federal bench and bar. Joanne has also chaired The Florida Bar's 15th Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee and co-chaired the Palm Beach County Bar Association's Diversity Internship Program. In addition, she was previously appointed as Defendants' Liaison Counsel by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in the federal multidistrict litigation alleging personal injury relating to the medication Zantac, In re Zantac (Ranitidine) Products Liability Litigation, MDL No. 2924.

Joanne has been listed among Florida's Leading Lawyers in the area of Litigation by *Chambers USA*, one of the oldest and most prestigious legal listings in the world.

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She has been named to *Florida Trend's* Legal Elite Notable - Women Leaders in Law since its 2023 inception and is recognized consistently by *Best Lawyers in America, Florida Super Lawyers*, and *Palm Beach Illustrated's* Top Lawyers list. She is the recipient of an AV Preeminent Rating from *Martindale-Hubbell*, awarded to only those lawyers with the highest ethical standards and legal ability.

Before joining Jones Foster, Joanne served as a judicial clerk for the Honorable Sarah S. Vance, United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

## Experience Highlights

### Defendants' Liaison Counsel in Zantac Products Liability Multidistrict Litigation

Local counsel for drug manufacturer, Sanofi, and appointed by Judge Robin Rosenberg , U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, as defendants' liaison counsel in Zantac products liability MDL involving claims that the active ingredient, ranitidine, contains low levels of NDMA, a cancer-causing chemical. Summary judgment was granted in favor of the brand-name drugmakers, dismissing all claims by the more than 2,450 plaintiffs and 150,000 additional claimants.

### Defense of $65 Million Claim Against Financial Services Chairman & CEO

Representation of publicly held financial services corporation and its chairman and chief executive officer in defense of $65 million claim brought by minority shareholders of wholly owned subsidiary alleging breach of fiduciary duty, breach of contract, fraud and civil theft in two-week hearing before AAA arbitration panel.

### Successful Defense of $50 Million Claim Against Laboratories

Secured early dismissal of RICO and fraud claims brought by the largest for-profit managed health care company in the world, seeking in excess of $50 million, on behalf of a half dozen laboratory defendants as well as their general partners and officers.

### Successful Defense of National Law Firm in Legal Malpractice Claim

Obtained directed verdict, affirmed on appeal, on behalf of national law firm sued for damages in excess of $20 million for alleged legal malpractice in drafting limited partnership documents.

### Local Counsel in Securities Fraud Lawsuit

Representation of publicly held company providing specialty contracting services to the telecommunications and infrastructure industry in putative class action under federal securities laws.

### Insurance Brokerage TCPA Class Action Defense

Representation of insurance brokerage in defense of consumer class action alleging violation of Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA") by sending unsolicited facsimile advertisements. Negotiated settlement and oversaw class administration.

### Printing Manufacturer TCPA Class Action Defense

Representation of nationwide print services company in defense of consumer class action alleging violation of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA") by sending 2,500 facsimile advertisements. Negotiated class action settlement and class administration.

### Palm Beach County State-of-the-Art Scientific Research Institute

Served as counsel to The Scripps Research Institute in establishing Scripps Florida, a new state-of-the-art scientific research institute, in Palm Beach County, Florida against a variety of legal challenges from environmental and non-profit organizations.

### Real Estate Broker Recovery of Commission

Representation of real estate broker suing to recover commission due on sale of $10.6 million home at buyer's full asking price pursuant to exclusive listing agreement. Negotiated favorable settlement after early mediation.

### Municipality Prevails in U.S. Court of Appeals in Case of First Impression

Representation of the Town of Palm Beach in a matter of first impression in the area of land use and constitutional law. A longtime resident argued that the Town's architectural review commission violated his constitutionally protected First Amendment right to freedom of expression and his Fourteenth Amendment rights to due process and equal protection when it denied his application to demolish his traditional-style home and construct a new international/modern-style home on the oceanfront lot. The commission denied the application because the proposed mansion was "excessively dissimilar" from other nearby homes in accordance with various architectural design criteria. The Southern District of Florida granted summary judgment in the Town's favor and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirmed in June 2021. The federal appellate court held that although the resident may have intended to communicate a message through his proposed home, there was no great likelihood that a reasonable viewer would understand it to convey some sort of message where the residence was set back from the street and obscured by dense landscaping there was no evidence that residential architecture has been historically used or understood to convey a message. The court also rejected the resident's attempt to void the Town's architectural review ordinance. The resident petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court for review, but the court ultimately declined to hear the appeal in March 2022.

### Successful Defense of Class Certification Involving Underground Utility Project

Lead Counsel in the representation of a municipality in defense of putative class actions challenging the bond referendum and special assessment criteria involved in the Town of Palm Beach's $90 million underground utility project. Trial court's order denying class certification after evidentiary hearing was affirmed on appeal.

### Successful Defense of Injunctive Relief

Resident of oceanfront municipality composed several large paintings, described by Plaintiff as "satires" or "lampoons", criticizing town officials on the exterior walls of his home following the town's denial of his variance application. Following an evidentiary preliminary injunction hearing, the federal court preliminarily denied resident's attempt to stop the town from enforcing its ordinance regulating exterior wall colors and found no constitutional violation and suit was voluntarily dismissed with prejudice.

### Successful Representation of Municipality in Fire Department Dispute

Obtained summary judgment for municipality in dispute with union-backed political action committee in which the PAC sought to block the creation of a municipal fire department.

### Municipality Sued Over Adoption of Waterfront Setback Line

Representation of the Town of Jupiter Island in pending challenge to the Town's adoption of a revised waterfront setback line as set forth in its supplemental land development regulations. Challenge asserts Town failed to meet statutory notice requirements and asserts ordinance of this type was subject to heightened notice under Florida law.

### Florida's Public Records Act & Public Records Requests

Defense of more than 3 dozen lawsuits brought against municipality under Florida's Public Records Act resulting in numerous non-jury trials. Advise municipality on response to more than 2,000 public records requests.

### Interpretation of Perpetual Parking Easement

Representation of property owner in suit relating to interpretation and application of perpetual parking easement negotiated as part of sale of several West Palm Beach office buildings for approximately $70 million. Dispute concerned expenses attributed to a multi-million dollar parking garage constructed after the easement was negotiated.

### Constitutionality of Proposed Ballot Initiative

A property-use agreement between municipality and owners of historic 60-year-old playhouse limited playhouse's use as theater of performing or visual arts and for lectures or other special events. Political action committee sought to amend municipality's charter to incorporate portions of the agreement's covenants. For municipality, obtained declaration that proposed amendment was unconstitutional as in conflict with state comprehensive planning law and did not have to be put to a vote. Defended declaration through appeal to the Fourth District and Florida Supreme Court decision declining jurisdiction.

### Successful Defense of Motion to Disqualify Attorney for Alleged Conflict of Interest

Successful defense of attorney against claim that attorney's representation of Plaintiff years prior in wholly unrelated matter created a disqualifying conflict of interest.

### Successful Defense of Florida-Based Law Firm in Federal Court

Successful defense of motion for sanctions in Federal Court against South Florida law firm following disqualification.

### Breakup of Law Firm Valued in Excess of $7 Million

Representation of minority owner of law firm with over 200 employees and offices in Florida and New York. Dispute on key decisions requiring super majority vote under operating agreement resulted in New York operation being formed as a new entity by minority shareholder.

### Appointment of Independent Forensic Examiner

Client moved to appoint an independent forensic examiner to inspect and copy computer storage devices in dispute over medical practice breakup. Following an evidentiary hearing, the court granted client's motion.

### National Builder Subsidiary Violates Florida Not-for-Profit Corporation Act When Operating South Florida Luxury Country Club

Representation of South Florida country club and golf course in suit against a Fortune 500 company, one of the nation's leading builders of luxury homes, and its subsidiary entity that controlled and operated the club prior to turnover to its equity

members. Suit alleged the builder's entities improperly profited from operating surpluses and membership payments of the luxury community's nonprofit club. Received favorable summary judgment, finding that the builder's subsidiary violated Florida's Not-for-Profit Corporation Act by retaining in excess of $4 million in operating surpluses.

**Successful Defense of Surgeon Against Claims of Tortious Interference**
Representation of surgeon against claims up to $16 million by anesthesiologist that surgeon and hospital conspired to tortiously interfere with anesthesiologist's business relationship, resulting in complete defense judgment including award of more than $100,000 in attorneys' fees and costs.

## Honors & Distinctions

**Florida Super Lawyers**
Business Litigation, 2010-Present
The Top 50: Women (Florida), 2021
The Top 100: Miami, 2021
Rising Star, 2009

**The Best Lawyers in America**
Commercial Litigation, 2013-Present
Litigation - Land Use and Zoning, 2027
Municipal Law, 2027

**Palm Beach Illustrated**
Top Lawyers, Appellate Practice, 2023-2025
Top Lawyers, Business Litigation, 2018, 2019, 2021-2022, 2024-Present
Top Lawyers, Commercial Litigation, 2018-2025
Top Lawyers, Land Use and Zoning Law, 2025
Top Lawyers, Municipal Law, 2023-2024
Top Lawyers, Bet-the-Company Litigation, 2022, 2024

**Florida Trend**
Legal Elite Notable - Women Leaders in Law, 2023-2026
Legal Elite, Commercial Litigation, 2011, 2018-2022

**South Florida Legal Guide**
Top Lawyers, 2010-2022

**Chambers USA**
Florida's Leading Lawyers in Litigation, 2010-2011
Up and Comer, 2007-2009

**Martindale-Hubbell AV® Rating**

## Affiliations

**Federal Bar Association, Palm Beach County Chapter**
Board Member, 2020-2022
President, 2019-2020
Vice President/President-Elect, 2018-2019
Secretary, 2017-2018
Treasurer, 2016-2017

**Florida Association for Women Lawyers, Palm Beach County Chapter**
Vice President, Board of Directors, 2026-Present
Justice Barbara Pariente Judicial Reception, Co-Chair, 2025
Member

**United States District Court Southern District of Florida**
Federal Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel, July-Oct. 2025
- *Appointed by Chief U.S. District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga*
Federal Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel, Dec. 2024
- *Appointed by Chief U.S. District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga*
West Palm Beach Federal Courthouse Committee, Member, 2018-2021
Federal Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel, Dec. 2016-May 2017
- *Appointed by Chief U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore*

**The Florida Bar**
Immediate Past Chair, Business Litigation Certification Committee, 2023-2024
Chair, Business Litigation Certification Committee, 2021-2022
Business Litigation Certification Committee, 2018-2024
Vice Chair, Federal Court Practice Committee, 2023-2025
Co-Chair, Federal Judicial Roundtable & Reception, 2023 Florida Bar Convention
Federal Court Practice Committee, 2019-2025
Professional Ethics Committee, 2007-2011
Business Law Section

**15th Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee "A"**
Chair, 2017-2018
Member, 2015-2018

**15th Judicial Circuit**
Local Professionalism Panel, 2024-2025
*- Appointed by Chief Judge Glenn Kelley*

**Palm Beach County Bar Association**
Co-Chair, Diversity Internship Program (DIP), 2022-2025
Committee for Diversity & Inclusion, 2022-2025
Co-Chair, Professionalism Committee, 2015-2016
Chair, Professionalism Committee, 2014-2015
Chair, Judicial Relations Committee, 2013-2014
Co-Chair, Annual Bench Bar Conference 2013 (approx. 800 attendees)

**Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches**
Board of Directors, 2018-2021

**Forum Club of the Palm Beaches**
Director, 2011-2014
Member, 2009-2014

**Duke University Alumni Association**
Vice President, 2015-2017
Director, 2012-2018

**Leadership Palm Beach County**
Co-Chair, Youth Leadership Committee, 2014-2016

Youth Leadership Committee, 2008-2016
Graduate, 2008

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