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## SZAFERMAN LAKIND SECURES RECOGNITION ON BEST LAWYERS' 14TH ANNUAL LIST OF BEST LAW FIRMS

Szaferman Lakind is pleased to announce its inclusion on the 14th annual Best Law Firms list, curated by Best Lawyers. The firm's notable achievements have merited it one national ranking and five metro rankings (New Jersey), including three Tier 1 ratings. These rankings underscore the firm's ongoing commitment to legal excellence and its consistent provision of high-quality service to its clients.

Szaferman Lakind's national ranking and five metropolitan rankings in New Jersey span a broad spectrum of practice areas, showcasing the firm's versatility and proficiency across multiple legal domains. Notably, the firm has achieved Tier 1 ratings in Commercial Litigation, Family Law, and Land Use and Zoning law, affirming its capabilities in these practice areas.

The Best Law Firms list is a respected industry resource that identifies leading law firms across the United States and in various metropolitan regions. Rankings are determined through a comprehensive assessment process, which includes peer reviews and client feedback. Attorneys are invited to confidentially evaluate law firms in their respective practice areas based on their experience and familiarity with the firms' work. This rigorous evaluation ensures that recognized firms have consistently demonstrated exceptional skill and ethical conduct.

In addition to the firm's collective recognition, eight Szaferman Lakind attorneys earned positions on the Best Lawyers in America list. These attorneys have consistently exhibited a steadfast commitment to providing outstanding legal representation and achieving favorable outcomes for their clients. Szaferman Lakind remains unwavering in its mission to deliver exceptional legal services while upholding the highest ethical standards, earning the trust and confidence of clients and peers alike.



Super Lawyers®\*

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## EIGHT SZAFERMAN LAKIND ATTORNEYS INCLUDED IN THE 2024 BEST LAWYERS® LIST

When it comes to legal acumen and recognition, the professionals at Szaferman, Lakind, Blumstein & Blader have once again proven their exceptional skills. In the recently released The Best Lawyers in America® 2024 list by BL Rankings, LLC\*, eight of the firm's attorneys have earned well-deserved spots, showcasing their prowess in five distinct legal sub-practice areas.

The practice areas include Family Law, Commercial Litigation, Land Use & Zoning, Personal Injury Litigation – Plaintiffs and Real Estate Law.

### The attorneys selected for the 2024 list include:

<b>ARNOLD C. LAKIND</b> COMMERCIAL LITIGATION + LAND USE & ZONING	<b>BARRY D. SZAFERMAN</b> FAMILY LAW	<b>BRIAN G. PAUL</b> FAMILY LAW	<b>BRIAN M. SCHWARTZ</b> FAMILY LAW
 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2009 - 2011, 2014 - 2024 Lawyer of the Year 2017</p>	 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2016 - 2024 Lawyer of the Year 2019</p>	 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2013 - 2024 Lawyer of the Year 2015, 2018, 2023</p>	 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2012-2024</p>
<b>CRAIG J. HUBERT</b> PERSONAL INJURY LITIGATION – PLAINTIFFS	<b>JEFFERY M. HALL</b> LAND USE & ZONING + REAL ESTATE LAW	<b>LINDSEY            MOSKOWITZ MEDVIN</b> FAMILY LAW	<b>ROBERT P. PANZER</b> FAMILY LAW
 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2013 - 2024 Lawyer of the Year 2019</p>	 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2017 - 2024</p>	 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2024</p>	 <p><i>Best Lawyers</i> 2024</p>

It's worth noting that Lindsey Moskowitz Medvin and Robert P. Panzer have achieved this distinction for the first time in the 2024 edition of Best Lawyers, a testament to their continuous growth and commitment to excellence.

The Best Lawyers recognition process stands out due to its stringent peer review methodology. The accolades are entirely based on the evaluations of leading lawyers in the same geographical area and legal practice. This approach ensures that the final selection is a genuine reflection of the acknowledged attorneys' professional abilities and impact within their respective fields.

As the legal landscape evolves, Szaferman, Lakind, Blumstein & Blader continues to demonstrate unwavering dedication to their clients and their commitment to excellence. Congratulations to the esteemed attorneys who have earned their place in The Best Lawyers in America® 2024 list!



**Arnold C. Lakind**  
Founding Partner

## ARNOLD LAKIND SECURES PENSION VICTORY FOR RETIRED TEACHER

In a case of first impression in New Jersey, the Superior Court, Appellate Division ruled that a retired teacher could not be disqualified from his deferred retirement benefit as a result of a guilty plea to a bank fraud charge which pre-dated his employment. Our client, J, committed bank fraud as a young man and received a probationary sentence. He left the banking industry and was hired by a local school district where he worked for eleven years and enjoyed excellent performance reviews. In the eleventh year of his employment, the Department of Education revoked J's teaching certificate. As a result, the school district fired him concluding that he was not qualified to teach because of the absence of the certificate.

When J reached the age of retirement, he applied for a deferred retirement benefit. The Teacher's Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) ruled that J was disqualified from the benefit because of his earlier guilty plea. In the view of the TPAF, J was ineligible for deferred retirement benefits because his involuntary separation from service was a removal for conduct unbecoming a teacher. J retained Arnold Lakind who filed an appeal with the Superior Court, Appellate Division.

On appeal, Arnold acknowledged that there was no case arising under the TPAF statutory scheme that addressed a teacher's entitlement to deferred retirement benefits after having plead guilty to a crime that occurred prior to the hiring date. However, courts had ruled, in other pension settings, that pre-employment conduct could not be the basis for forfeiture of a retirement benefit. According to Arnold, the pension statute did not require forfeiture and to impose forfeiture would be tantamount to an enhanced criminal penalty. Because the criminal charge was unrelated to J's teaching, it was, Arnold argued, improper to require that J forfeit his pension. The Attorney General argued that teachers must be held to the highest standard of conduct and the timing of the criminal charges was irrelevant. In a unanimous decision, the Appellate Division agreed with Arnold, adopted our arguments, and awarded our elderly client his deferred retirement benefit.



**Jonathan I. Epstein**  
Partner

## VETERAN ATTORNEY JONATHAN I. EPSTEIN, FORMERLY OF FAEGRE DRINKER, JOINS SZAFERMAN LAKIND AS PARTNER

**Epstein to focus practice on commercial litigation, real estate and business dispute resolutions**

Jonathan I. Epstein has joined the firm as Partner. Epstein formerly practiced at Faegre Drinker for more than 35 years and specializes in commercial litigation and real estate development. He brings a wealth of experience to the firm and aims to build a new practice handling mediations and all facets of commercial disputes. Jon was the Managing Partner of the Faegre Drinker Princeton office for 25 years.

"We are pleased to have my longtime friend and highly experienced attorney Jon Epstein join our ranks," said Szaferman Lakind Founding Partner Barry Szaferman. "Jon is an accomplished lawyer with a track record of success, and we're looking forward to leaning on his experience as both an excellent attorney and a mentor to many young lawyers."

Epstein's departure from his longtime firm, Faegre Drinker, was amicable, he explained. "Faegre Drinker is a fantastic law firm. The team there is outstanding, and I undertake this next chapter of my career with gratitude and admiration for all of my former colleagues," he said. "Looking forward, I am excited to finish out my career with longtime friends at Szaferman Lakind and to continue my real estate development and business litigation practice along with the opportunity to grow a commercial mediation practice with my retired judge friends at the firm."

Epstein's office is located in the Szaferman Lakind Lawrenceville office at 101 Grover Mills Road. His new e-mail address is [Jonathan.Epstein@szaferman.com](mailto:Jonathan.Epstein@szaferman.com).

## DAN SWEETSER WINS JURY TRIAL IN MILLION DOLLAR BUSINESS DISPUTE



**Dan Sweetser**  
Partner

On May 3, 2023, a Mercer County jury returned a unanimous verdict in favor of Business Litigation Partner Dan Sweetser's clients in a hotly contested business partnership dispute.

Dan represented a metal alloys company in India and its owners. The plaintiff in the lawsuit is a New Jersey man who grew up in India and knew Dan's clients. He alleged that Dan's clients entered into an oral contract with him to co-own and financially support a scrap metal business that he started in New Jersey. He claimed that our clients breached the oral agreement and owed him \$750,000 in contract damages, plus hundreds of thousands of dollars in other damages.

Dan's clients agreed that they helped the plaintiff start his business and bought scrap metal from him. However, they vigorously denied entering into an oral agreement with him to co-own and share in the expenses of his New Jersey business.

After a bitter seven-day jury trial before Mercer County Presiding Civil Judge Douglas Hurd, the eight-person jury returned a unanimous verdict in favor of Dan's clients. The jury found from the evidence, which included the testimony of 10 witnesses and over 100 exhibits, that Dan's clients did not have a contract with the plaintiff and did not owe him any money.

Dan's clients are overjoyed with the jury verdict. They greatly appreciate the time and effort Dan put into preparing for the trial, and his passion and advocacy at trial.

"I am thrilled with the verdict in favor of my clients and very happy that they can put this matter behind them," said Dan. "This case has been aggressively litigated since its inception four years ago and was a hard-fought legal battle. I am appreciative that the jury was able to find the truth and vindicate my clients from the serious claims made against them."

Dan is a Partner in the firm's Business Law and Litigation Group. For over three decades, Dan has been successfully litigating a wide range of cases in the State and Federal courts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Dan represents clients in the areas of employment law, contracts, business disputes, shareholder disputes, insurance matters and civil rights law. To contact Dan, please email him at [DSweetser@szaferman.com](mailto:DSweetser@szaferman.com) or call (609) 275-0400.



**Thomas J. Manzo**  
Partner

## ATTORNEY THOMAS J. MANZO SETTLES PERSONAL INJURY CASE FOR \$310,000

Thomas J. Manzo recently represented a plaintiff who was involved in a vehicular accident with a tractor trailer.

The plaintiff was struck by the tractor trailer when it made a wide right turn that cut into the plaintiff's lane of travel on the perpendicular street. The plaintiff had previously sustained shoulder injuries in past accidents, but Tom successfully argued that the impact of the tractor trailer worsened the plaintiff's preexisting condition, which ultimately required surgical repair.

The total compensation awarded was \$310,000, which included pain and suffering damages and wages lost while the plaintiff was forced to miss work for the surgical repair and recovery time.

Thomas J. Manzo focuses his practice on a variety of personal injury matters including auto accidents, catastrophic injuries, compensation for victims of crime, slip and fall, and TBI. To contact Thomas, please call (609) 275-0400 or email him directly at [tmanzo@szaferman.com](mailto:tmanzo@szaferman.com).



## OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY IN 2023

As the holiday season brings forth the spirit of giving, Szaferman Lakind is demonstrating its commitment to support various charitable organizations. This year, the firm is proud to stand with the Rescue Mission of Trenton, an organization dedicated to assisting individuals facing homelessness and adversity.

The Rescue Mission of Trenton operates an emergency shelter and day center, providing immediate relief and essential services, such as addiction counseling, mental health support, housing assistance, and job training. Szaferman Lakind recognizes the importance of addressing both immediate needs and long-term solutions.

In addition to its support for the Rescue Mission of Trenton, Szaferman Lakind is extending its commitment to community well-being by assisting several organizations:



### **Anchor House of NJ:**

The firm supports Anchor House of NJ, which offers shelter, school outreach, housing, and street outreach to youths aged 12 to 21 in Mercer County and beyond.

### **HomeFront-NJ:**

Szaferman Lakind's team is fulfilling holiday wishes for over 30 children through HomeFront-NJ, an agency addressing family homelessness and providing essentials.

### **Watershed Institute:**

The firm is directing support to the Watershed Institute, an organization focused on promoting the health and resilience of New Jersey's watersheds.

### **Leukemia & Lymphoma Society:**

Szaferman Lakind contributes to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, aiding medical research and improving the quality of life for affected families.

### **POAC Autism Services:**

The firm supports POAC Autism Services, making a positive impact on the lives of those affected by autism.

### **New Jersey State Bar Foundation's Medal of Honor:**

Szaferman Lakind invests in the legal profession and the community by supporting this prestigious award for professionals contributing to the justice system in New Jersey.

Additionally, Szaferman Lakind is committed to organizations that provide vital mental health education and personal safety programs. Notably, both Attitudes In Reverse (AIR®) and PEI Kids, with co-managing partner Craig J. Hubert on their board of trustees, contribute to this cause.

**Attitudes In Reverse (AIR®)** offers a comprehensive mental health plan for youth, from elementary to college-age.

**PEI Kids** focuses on promoting a safe environment for all children, providing prevention, intervention, and advocacy programs related to personal safety and well-being.

As the holiday season unfolds, Szaferman Lakind's constructive efforts stand as a testament to the firm's commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities. Through these purposeful contributions, the law firm actively contributes to the betterment of society, embodying the true spirit of the season.



**Brian G. Paul**  
Co-Managing Partner

## **SZAFERMAN LAKIND CO-MANAGING PARTNER BRIAN G. PAUL APPOINTED AS CO-CHAIR OF THE NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION'S AMICUS COMMITTEE**

Szaferman Lakind is pleased to announce that Co-Managing Partner, Brian G. Paul, has been appointed as Co-Chair of the New Jersey State Bar Association's (NJSBA) Amicus Committee. This is a testament to Brian's dedication, experience, and expertise in the field, and we wholeheartedly congratulate him on this appointment.

The Amicus Committee is a significant component of the NJSBA, playing a pivotal role in the legal landscape of New Jersey. The committee's primary mission revolves around providing cogent and informed recommendations concerning whether the NJSBA should participate as amicus curiae in cases that are pending before the New Jersey Supreme Court.

For those less familiar with the term, an amicus curiae, which translates from Latin as "friend of the court," is an entity or individual who is not a party to the litigation but offers information, expertise, or insight that bears on the case's issues. The purpose of this involvement is to assist the court in its decision-making process, especially when the case's ramifications extend beyond the immediate parties to affect broader societal interests.

When the NJSBA lends its voice as an amicus curiae, it's a clear signal of the case's significance in shaping New Jersey's legal framework. Thus, the committee's work is paramount in ensuring that the association's participation is in the best interests of both the legal community and the general public.

Brian G. Paul's appointment as Co-Chair underscores the respect and trust he has earned within the legal community. As Co-Managing Partner of Szaferman Lakind, he has consistently demonstrated not just legal acumen, but also a deep understanding of the broader implications and nuances of landmark cases. This experience will undoubtedly serve him and the Amicus Committee well in the deliberations and recommendations they put forth.



**Lionel J. Frank**  
Partner

## **LIONEL J. FRANK OF SZAFERMAN LAKIND FEATURED IN PROMINENT NEW JERSEY LAW JOURNAL ARTICLE**

The New Jersey Law Journal, a prominent legal publication, spotlighted Szaferman Lakind Partner Lionel J. Frank in an article titled "Causing a Stink? Wave of Fragrance Antitrust Suits Tied to Government Probes." The article delves into a growing trend in the legal sector: a surge in antitrust lawsuits aimed at the fragrance industry.

Antitrust law, a cornerstone of ensuring fair competition in the market, often becomes a hot topic when industries show signs of monopolistic tendencies or anti-competitive behavior. The fragrance industry is currently under scrutiny, with multiple lawsuits alleging violations of antitrust laws. These lawsuits, as highlighted by the New Jersey Law Journal, are intricately tied to various government investigations, signaling a broader concern about potential anti-competitive actions within the sector.

As a partner at Szaferman Lakind, Lionel's spotlight in the New Jersey Law Journal is not just a recognition of his proficiency but is also an affirmation of the importance of vigilance in ensuring that markets remain competitive and fair for all stakeholders. His experience as an antitrust attorney make him a leading voice in the ongoing conversations about market dynamics and competition regulations.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude and appreciation for the trust you have placed in Szaferman Lakind. It is our distinct privilege to serve you, and we would like to take a moment to express our heartfelt thanks.

In 2023, our commitment to excellence and True Counsel continued to guide us, allowing us to achieve several significant milestones. We invite you to delve deeper into these achievements by perusing this newsletter for more details.

### To summarize some highlights:

- One of our proudest moments this year was witnessing the well-deserved recognition bestowed upon two of our colleagues, Craig J. Hubert and Thomas J. Manzo. Their tireless efforts in preserving the rights of childhood sexual assault victims led to them receiving the Amicus Award, a testament to their dedication and unwavering pursuit of justice.
- Another standout achievement was Brian G. Paul's sixth NJSBA Amicus Award, a remarkable accomplishment. Brian's expertise in the legal arena has not only earned him this prestigious award but also led to his appointment as the Co-Chair of the New Jersey State Bar Association's Amicus Committee. We applaud his exceptional contributions to our legal community.
- Janine G. Bauer's inclusion in Senator Lorretta Weinberg's 2023 Women's Power List speaks volumes about her outstanding achievements and leadership in our profession. Her dedication to excellence has been widely recognized, and we couldn't be prouder.
- At Szaferman Lakind, we firmly believe in giving back to our community. This year, we partnered with Arc Mercer to provide opportunities for Americans with disabilities. This collaboration is a testament to our commitment to making a positive impact beyond the courtroom.
- We were also delighted to welcome veteran attorney Jonathan I. Epstein as a Partner. His wealth of experience and legal acumen further strengthens our team, allowing us to better serve your needs.
- Furthermore, we are proud to announce that eight of our attorneys have been included in the 2024 Best Lawyers® List, a testament to our team's expertise and dedication to our clients.
- Lastly, we are pleased to share that Szaferman Lakind secured recognition on Best Lawyers' 14th Annual List of Best Law Firms. This acknowledgment reaffirms our commitment to providing the highest level of legal services.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we remain steadfast in our dedication to serving you with excellence, integrity, and professionalism. We understand the importance of the trust you place in us, and we are committed to continuing to meet and exceed your expectations.

Once again, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to the opportunities and challenges that the future holds, and we are honored to have you by our side.

We wish you and your loved ones a joyful and prosperous year ahead.

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## IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

*We are pleased to announce the growth of our personal injury practice with the addition of an accomplished attorney. With over 40 years of experience in personal injury law, this seasoned professional enhances our firm's capabilities to effectively serve clients in this area. We look forward to sharing more details about this strategic appointment soon.*