



## JOHN G. WILLARD

### ASSOCIATE

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John Willard is a banking and restructuring attorney in the firm's Financial and Real Estate Services practice group. He has extensive experience advising a wide range of clients in complex financial transactions and corporate restructurings.

In his banking practice, John focuses on representing domestic and international financial institutions, as well as corporate borrowers, in financings across a variety of industries, including media and entertainment, real estate, manufacturing, technology and retail. He has represented financiers and borrowers in numerous complex syndicated loan transactions, mergers and acquisitions, real estate developments, recapitalizations, working capital loans, spin-offs and debt restructurings.

In his restructuring practice, John advises corporate and financial institutions on bankruptcy and creditor rights issues. His bankruptcy experience includes representing numerous debtor companies in Chapter 11 reorganizations, including domestic and international retailers and energy companies, highly regulated institutions, bank holding companies and liquidating trusts. Representative Chapter 11 clients include Payless ShoeSource (the largest specialty family footwear retailer in the Western Hemisphere), Peabody Energy Corporation (the largest private-sector coal company in the world), Armstrong Energy, Inc. (one of the largest producers of thermal coal in the Illinois basin), and the Gold Fields Liquidating Trust (a spin-off from Peabody Energy Corporation's chapter 11 reorganization).

John's dynamic background in law, business, entertainment and international affairs has made him a natural fit for a variety of clients seeking outside general counsel, including the world's largest international neurosurgical organization.

### SERVICES AND INDUSTRIES

Bankruptcy and Financial  
Restructuring

Real Estate

Corporate

Financial Services

Outside General Counsel

Financial Services and Banking

### ADMISSIONS

Missouri

U.S. District Court, Eastern

District of Missouri

U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Eastern

District of Missouri

### EDUCATION

- Saint Louis University (J.D.)
  - Intellectual Property Law Association
- Rhodes College (B.A.)
  - Spanish
  - Rhodes Ambassador
  - Kappa Sigma Fraternity
  - Presidential Scholar
- University of Salamanca - Spain (2005)
  - International Studies

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis
- The Missouri Bar

## CHARITABLE AND CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- USS Gerald R. Ford Ship Sponsor Advisory Committee
- Aim High St. Louis (Legal Leader Board)
- Loyola Academy of St. Louis (Junior Board of Directors)
- Young Friends of the Saint Louis Art Museum
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society (2015 Corporate Achievers Campaign)
- St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers & Accountants for the Arts (Volunteer Attorney)
- St. Louis Criminal Justice Ministry (2014-2015)

## ACCOLADES

- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Ones to Watch, Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law, Real Estate Law (2021)

## LANGUAGES

- Spanish

## BACKGROUND

Prior to joining the firm, John was an associate at another St. Louis law firm where he focused on banking, mergers and acquisitions, corporate, bankruptcy and real estate law. Before entering law school, John was a professional film and stage actor, musician and dancer. He also worked for several years in Los Angeles on the corporate side of some of the nation's preeminent studios.

## EXPERIENCE

### **Co-counsel to Foresight Energy, Affiliated Debtors in Chapter 11 Proceedings**

Serving as co-counsel to Foresight Energy LP, a producer of thermal coal, and 30 affiliated debtors in Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

### **\$30 Million Private Equity Financing and Formation of Specialty Brokerage**

Advised a national independent enterprise risk management agency on completion of \$30 million in private equity financing. In connection with the financing, advised client on formation and capitalization of a specialty brokerage and investment banking platform offering insurance solutions to public and private companies and private equity sponsors.

### **Borrower's Counsel on \$46 Million Real Estate Loan**

Served as borrower's counsel on a \$46 million real estate loan secured by a 312-unit multifamily residential development.

**Counsel to Consulting Firm in Toy Retailer Bankruptcy**

Served as counsel to a global consulting firm in the bankruptcy proceedings of one of the world's largest toy retailers.

**Counsel to Coal-Mining Company in Chapter 11 Proceedings**

Served as co-counsel to the largest private-sector coal company in the world in its Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.

**Counsel on Movie Production Financing**

Served as financier's counsel on a \$35 million movie production financing.

**Borrower's Counsel on \$50 Million Construction Loan**

Served as borrower's counsel on a \$50 million real estate construction loan.

**\$400 Million Recapitalization**

Represented client in a recapitalization transaction. The matter included the client's holding company and all of its affiliates.

**Co-counsel to Coal Company in Chapter 11 Bankruptcy**

Served as co-counsel to the debtor, a coal company, in its Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.

**Co-counsel to Retailer in Chapter 11, Post-bankruptcy Proceedings**

Serving as co-counsel to a specialty footwear retailer and its related debtor affiliates in Chapter 11 restructuring and post-bankruptcy proceedings. Client is the largest specialty family footwear retailer in the Western Hemisphere with nearly 4,400 stores across more than 30 countries.

**Dismissal of Environmental Claims Against Energy Client**

Obtained dismissal of environmental claims against a client in the energy industry. Because the lawsuit in question was filed after the client filed its Chapter 11 reorganization plan, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court granted the client's motion to enforce the release and injunction provisions in the confirmed plan. As a result, the court dismissed the causes of action with prejudice.

**Counsel to Borrower for \$180 Million Credit Facility**

Counsel to the borrower, an international scrap metal processor, with respect to a \$180 million syndicated credit facility.

**Handled Liquidation Proceedings for Mining and Metallurgy Company**

Served as counsel to the liquidating trustee of a mining and metallurgy company following the company's Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.