Armstrong Teasdale

JOHN G. WILLARD

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John Willard is a banking and restructuring attorney in the firm's Financial and Real Estate Services practice group and leader of the Debt Finance practice. 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, spinoffs 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 Foresight Energy LP (a leading producer of thermal coal), 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 spinoff from Peabody Energy Corporation's chapter 11 reorganization).

John's dynamic professional background in entertainment, finance, business, and international transactions has made him a versatile counselor for a wide array of clients and organizations, including Academy Award-winning artists, the world's largest neurosurgical society, and the historical trust of a former United States President.

EDUCATION

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

SERVICES AND INDUSTRIES

Restructuring, Insolvency and Bankruptcy
Real Estate
Corporate
Debt Finance
Outside Corporate Counsel
Financial Services and Banking

ADMISSIONS

Missouri
New York
U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri
U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Eastern District of Missouri

- International Studies

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis
- The Missouri Bar
- The New York Bar
- American Bankruptcy Institute
- INSOL International

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

- Lawdragon 500 Leading Global Bankruptcy & Restructuring Lawyers (2024)
- Missouri/Kansas Super Lawyers®, Rising Star (2022-present)
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Ones to Watch, Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law, Real Estate Law (2021-present), Banking and Finance Law (2024-present)

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

Represented Hotel Chain in Airline Bankruptcy

Representation of national hotel chain (150+ hotels) in Spirit Airlines, Inc.'s Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Nine-Figure Multi-Currency Credit Facilities

Representation of leading U.S. and Swedish energy storage developer in out-of-court restructuring of nine-figure multi-currency credit facilities.

$85 Million Cross-Border Acquisition Financing

Lead counsel to global manufacturing company on $85 million cross-border (U.S., U.K., Netherlands, Taiwan, Germany, Australia) acquisition financing.

Borrower's Counsel on Eight-Figure Cross-Border (US-MEX) Loan to International Meat Exporter

Served as borrower's counsel to an international meat exporter having operations in the U.S., Mexico and Colombia, on its eight-figure, cross-border, senior secured asset-based revolving credit facility.

Borrower's Counsel on $1.9 Billion Loan to Fortune 500 Real Estate Investment Trust

Served as borrower's counsel to a US-based Fortune 500 real estate investment trust on a $1.9 billion mortgage-secured loan.

Borrower's Counsel on Eight-Figure Cross-Border Loan to International Manufacturer of Finishing Equipment

Served as borrower's counsel to an international manufacturer of finishing equipment counsel on its eight-figure, cross-border, senior secured term loan and asset-based revolving credit facility.

U.S. Obligors' Counsel on Restructuring of Multicurrency, Cross-Border Debt Facility

Served as U.S. obligors' counsel to a leading London-based e-commerce business on the restructuring of its multicurrency debt facility from a British multinational bank.

Lead Counsel on Multimillion-Dollar Cross-Border Loan

Served as lead counsel to an international bank on a multimillion-dollar (U.S. and Canadian dollars), cross-border, senior secured loan.

Advised VSA Capital Limited in Connection with Rule 2.7 Announcement

Advised VSA Capital Limited in connection with the Rule 2.7 announcement for the recommended cash offer by Inform Information Systems Limited for the entire issued, and to be issued, ordinary share capital of Universe Group plc to be effected by means of a scheme of arrangement under Part 26 of the Companies Act 2006 (Acquisition). VSA Capital is the financial adviser to Professional DataSolutions, Inc. and Inform for the acquisition.

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 Peabody Energy in Chapter 11 Proceedings

Served as co-counsel to Peabody Energy, 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 Armstrong Energy in Chapter 11 Bankruptcy

Served as co-counsel to the debtor, coal company Armstrong Energy, 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.