

Daniel J. Vaccaro

Partner

Overview

Clients turn to Dan when facing white-collar criminal or complex civil litigation, relying on him for the judgment, sound counsel, and strong courtroom skills he has developed through years of trial experience as a federal and state prosecutor and defense lawyer.

Dan routinely helps companies and individuals respond effectively to government inquiries and investigations, especially in relation to fraud and cybercrime. He represents targets, defendants, and witnesses at all stages of the criminal process, including preliminary government investigations, grand jury investigations, plea negotiations, trials, appeals, and parallel civil enforcement proceedings such as SEC enforcement investigations. He has successfully represented clients in matters involving alleged financial services fraud, securities fraud, health care fraud, defense contracting, export violations, environmental violations, trade secrets, money-laundering violations, and False Claims Act and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.

Dan also helps corporate organizations structure and conduct internal investigations of alleged illegal or unethical activity. He has handled investigations for both public and private entities in a wide range of industries, including financial services, manufacturing, agricultural, education, trucking, and defense contracting. In addition, he provides counsel to business organizations to develop guidelines and improve corporate compliance programs to avoid intervention by federal and state investigators.

On the civil side, Dan has prosecuted and defended a wide variety of complex claims. He concentrates on large-scale commercial disputes for financial institutions and the defense of product liability actions and other tort cases.

Dan has conducted more than 135 jury and bench trials before federal and state courts, and has represented clients in numerous administrative and regulatory hearings before state and local agencies. He has also successfully litigated and argued before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First and Seventh Circuits.



djvaccaro@michaelbest.com

Milwaukee

T. 414.223.2535

Legal Assistant

Karen Brandt

kjbrandt@michaelbest.com

T. 414.225.4937

Industries

Banking & Financial Services

Practices

Commercial Litigation

Government Investigations & White
Collar Defense

Litigation

Unfair Competition & Trade Secrets

Dan is a past Chair of the Firm's Litigation Practice Group, having led the group from 2012-2017.

Experience

Defending against white-collar charges and government investigations

Dan has successfully represented clients in a wide variety of criminal cases and investigations in recent years. Among these many representations, he successfully:

- Defended a publicly-traded financial institution in a multi-year SEC enforcement investigation and parallel grand jury investigation involving allegations of financial fraud that resulted in no finding of liability or financial penalty to financial institution
- Defended a higher education institution in False Claims Act investigation related to use of federal grant funds
- Represented national advocacy organization in John Doe investigation related to campaign finance activities
- Defended addiction treatment provider in DEA civil enforcement action
- Defended an industrial refrigeration service corporation in a criminal trade-secret prosecution
- Represented a pharmaceutical distributor in a grand jury investigation related to Medicaid fraud
- Defended an agricultural manufacturer in an investigation involving a death of a third party by employee operating agricultural equipment
- Defended agricultural insurance agency in grand jury investigation related to insurance fraud in agricultural sector
- Defended securities broker dealer in stock manipulation securities fraud investigation
- Represented former school board director in relation to investigation involving allegations of teacher misconduct with students

Leading internal investigations of alleged wrongdoing

Dan has conducted numerous internal investigations. Recently, he:

- Conducted internal investigation of actions by management level employees at solid waste disposal facilities related to compliance with federal and state environmental regulations
- Conducted internal investigation of actions of former CFO at university related to compliance with federal education regulations
- Conducted internal investigation of actions of employees engaged in an internal fraud and theft scheme against manufacturing facility
- Conducted internal investigation of actions of educator related to historical allegations of inappropriate conduct with students

Counseling on compliance

Given his previous prosecution experience, Dan is often called upon to develop internal compliance, policies and procedures for clients to comply with various federal and state laws. Dan has prepared compliance programs such as the following:

- Created anti-money laundering compliance program related to pre-paid credit cards for national retailer
- Created Foreign Corrupt Practices Act compliance and training program for international entertainment and hospitality company

Prevailing in complex civil cases

In recent years, Dan:

- Acted as lead counsel for all trial and appellate litigation involving a correspondent banking agreement resulting in a \$53 million judgment for client
- Represented an insurance-processing and technology company in a dispute against former officers who left the company to begin a competing enterprise
- Defended a leading manufacturer of street-sweeper equipment in a products liability action
- Defended an international travel service company in a negligence action arising out of bus accident involving U.S. tourists traveling abroad
- Defended financial institution against liability claims arising from criminal actions by third party against institution customer
- Defended pharmaceutical manufacturer in arbitration against claims by former CEO related to stock warrants
- Represented financial institution services provider in coverage action against primary and excess insurance policy issuers for losses related to product

Winning cases — and recognition — as a federal prosecutor

As an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Puerto Rico, Dan was responsible for investigating and prosecuting organized crime, capital murder, international narcotics, money laundering, law enforcement corruption, white collar, and other major felony cases. During his service as a federal prosecutor, he:

- Received the U.S. Department of Justice's Director's Award for Superior Performance from the U.S. Attorney General
- Received a Special Achievement Award from the U.S. Department of Justice for the investigation and prosecution of a former state prosecutor who was involved in a conspiracy with a violent drug trafficking organization
- Received an award from the U.S. Department of Treasury, U.S. Customs Service — Office of Internal Affairs for his work on law enforcement corruption cases
- Received an award from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs — Office of Inspector General for the investigation and prosecution of a violent criminal organization responsible for the murder of a federal police officer for the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs

- Served as attorney coordinator for the Puerto Rico–U.S. Virgin Islands High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, which was voted “Outstanding HIDTA in the Nation” in 2002, during his tenure

Taking on big, multi-party litigation as a state prosecutor

As an Assistant State’s Attorney in Howard County, Maryland, Dan prosecuted misdemeanor and felony cases. His work preparing, directing and trying multi-party complex litigation included investigating and prosecuting Howard County’s first organized gang case.

Honors & Recognitions

- "Lawyer of the Year" (Milwaukee Area), Criminal Defense: White-Collar, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2021
- Litigation Star (White Collar Crime), *Benchmark Litigation*, 2011, 2013-2014, 2016-present
- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Criminal Defense: White-Collar law, 2014-present
- *The Midwest’s Best Lawyers*®, Criminal Defense: White-Collar law, 2021
- "Wisconsin Super Lawyers" list, *Super Lawyers* magazine, 2014-2017
- Leaders in the Law, *Wisconsin Law Journal*, 2014
- Leading Lawyer, *Chambers USA*, 2005

Professional Activities

- Vice President and Member of Board of Directors, Federal Defender Services of Wisconsin, Inc.
- Member, Board of Directors, Centro Legal
- Member, American Bar Association, Criminal Justice and Litigation Sections
- Member, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Member, Eastern District of Wisconsin Bar Association
- Member, State Bar of Wisconsin
- Member, Milwaukee Bar Association

Education

- American University, Washington College of Law, Juris Doctor (J.D.), *cum laude*, 1990
- University of Wisconsin-Madison, Bachelor of Science (B.S.), with distinction, 1986

Admissions

- Maryland
- Wisconsin
- United States Supreme Court
- United States Court of Appeals, First Circuit

- United States Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit
- United States Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- United States District Court, District of Maryland
- United States District Court, Eastern District of Wisconsin
- United States District Court, Western District of Wisconsin

Community Involvement

- Member, Board of Directors, South Milwaukee Lions Foundation
- Member, South Milwaukee Lions Club
- Member, South Shore Chamber of Commerce

Related News

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