



Sara M. Turner

Shareholder

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Sara M. Turner is a shareholder in the Birmingham, Alabama, office and serves as chair of Baker Donelson's Hospitality Industry Service Team.

As a shareholder in Baker Donelson's Birmingham, Alabama office, Sara M. Turner is committed to advancing the interests of her clients through her experience and innovative legal solutions. Serving as the chair of the Firm's Hospitality Industry Service Team and Second Vice-President of DRI, Sara proactively connects with in-house counsel and other professionals to exchange insights and promote growth.

Sara's background includes successful tenures as the former Secretary-Treasurer of DRI, DRI Board Member, and Chair of DRI's Retail and Hospitality and Technology Committees. She has refined her skills in managing a wide array of litigation claims. These include hospitality, franchise, timeshare, human trafficking, product liability, drug and medical device, class action, and commercial litigation.

Sara not only has experience serving as outside general counsel but also excels at coordinating nationwide defense strategies for her clients. When alternative dispute resolution methods fail, Sara skillfully represents clients before arbitrators, judges, and juries, leveraging her considerable trial experience and deep industry knowledge.



Case Studies

- [Summary Judgment Victories for Choice Hotels International, Inc. - TVPRA Litigation](#)



Representative Matters

- Secured an Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals dismissal for one of the largest hotel chains in the world following oral arguments before the judicial panel.
- Issued a generic statement about nationwide dismissals of a global hotel franchisor in litigation involving allegations of sex trafficking.
- Negotiated favorable terms for a specialty pharmaceutical client in a matter with the Attorney General of Alabama following substantial talks with the plaintiffs the day before trial.
- Obtained summary judgment for a franchisor in a vicarious liability case the morning of trial, successfully avoiding a \$4.5 million verdict which was awarded against the co-defendants.
- Negotiated a favorable settlement for one of the nation's largest independently owned petroleum marketing companies in a complex commercial transaction involving biodiesel and other natural fuels.
- Represented a large franchisor in a high-dollar hospitality-related franchise dispute.
- Obtained the dismissal of claims against a pharmaceutical company alleging personal injuries from the use of an antipsychotic prescription drug. The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit dismissed the plaintiff's appeal, concluding it lacked an arguable basis in law or fact.
- Represented a U.S.-based manufacturer in a lengthy international arbitration proceeding in Mexico City.
- Successfully defended a products manufacturer in the accidental choking death of a three-year-old child.
- Defended a catastrophic personal injury case involving a forklift manufacturer and a major trucking company.
- Represented a fertilizer manufacturer in a commercial dispute involving major crop loss damages.

- Defended various nursing homes in cases ranging from sexual abuse allegations to wrongful death matters.
- Handled a number of toxic exposure cases acting as counsel for both chemical corporations and heavy machinery manufacturers.
- Won summary judgment on behalf of a timeshare management company in a federal complex tort lawsuit alleging the company committed commercial litigation fraud. The United States Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit affirmed the judgment.



Professional Honors & Activities

- AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rated by Martindale-Hubbell
- Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America*® for Product Liability Litigation - Defendants (2024, 2025) and Commercial Litigation (2025)
- Selected to Mid-South Super Lawyers, Personal Injury - Products: Defense (2016 – 2023)
- Selected to Mid-South Super Lawyers as one of the top 50 female attorneys (2018, 2019, 2022, 2023)
- Selected to Alabama Super Lawyers, Personal Injury - Products: Defense (2014 – 2015)
- Selected to the *Birmingham Business Journal's* 2024 Best of the Bar List
- Listed in *The International Who's Who of Product Liability Defence Lawyers* (2024)
- Listed in BTI Consulting Group's *Client Service All-Stars for Law Firms* (2017 and 2023)
- Named by *B-Metro Magazine* as one of "Birmingham's Top Women Lawyers" (2016 – 2018, 2020, 2022)
- Named to the *Birmingham Business Journal's* 2020 "Women to Watch" list
- Named by *B-Metro Magazine* as a "Top Flight Attorney" (2018)
- Named "Top 40 Professional Under 40," *Birmingham Business Journal* (2013)
- Listed in *Alabama Rising Stars*, Personal Injury - Products: Defense (2011 – 2013)
- Member – DRI (Chair, Technology Committee; Social Networking Taskforce; Membership Chair, Products Liability Steering Committee; Seminar Vice Chair, Young Lawyer's Steering Committee)
- Second Vice-President – DRI (2024—)
- Secretary-Treasurer – DRI (2023 – 2024)
- Board of Directors – DRI (2020 – 2023)
- Chair – DRI Retail and Hospitality Committee (2019 – 2023)
- Vice Chair – DRI Retail and Hospitality Committee (2017)
- Former Chair – Steering Committee, DRI Trucking Law Committee (Chair, Teleconference Subcommittee)
- Former Chair – Steering Committee, DRI Young Lawyers Committee (SLDO Subcommittee; Teleconference Subcommittee, Annual Meeting Subcommittee)
- Former Substantive Liaison between the DRI Young Lawyers Committee and the DRI Trucking Law Committee
- Former Committee Liaison between the DRI Young Lawyers Section and the Minnesota Defense Lawyers Association
- Member – Federal, American, Alabama, and Minnesota Bar Associations
- Member – International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC)
- Member – Board of Directors, Homewood Youth Cheerleading
- Member – Homewood Industrial Development Board
- Participant – Illinois Association of Defense Trial Counsel, Trial Academy
- Former Chair – Minnesota Defense Lawyers, Products Liability Committee
- Former Chair – Minnesota Defense Lawyers, New Lawyers Committee



Publications

- "Statute of Limitations Change in Human Trafficking Litigation for Minors" (September 2022)
- "Cheers to Ch-ch-ch-changes – Turn and Face the Strange," *Women's Initiative Newsletter* (December 2020)
- "The Coronavirus Challenge: What Hospitality Businesses Should Consider Doing Now," republished April 7, 2020, in *Hotel Business* (March 13, 2020)
- "Hotel Brand Sex-Trafficking Litigation Update: Consolidation Denied" (February 2020)
- "DRI For Life: Is it Time to Take a Fresh Look at Your Parental Leave Policy?," *For the Defense* (March 2016)
- Co-author – "Re-Examining the Learned Intermediary Doctrine: The Age-Old Theory Appears Alive and Well," *IADC Committee Newsletter* (July 2015)
- "Litigation: Labeling lawsuit defenses," *InsideCounsel.com* (April 2013)
- "Litigation: What to know about the new 'Big Food' lawsuits," *InsideCounsel* (September 2012)
- "IP in Joint Ventures with Universities or Nonprofits," *ACCDocket* (September 2011)
- "We Are All Becoming 'Techies'," *For The Defense* (January 2011)



Speaking Engagements

- "What Hotels Wish You Knew About Event Contracts," DRI (October 2020)
- "Working From Home, Homeschooling, and the Issues Both Present," DRI podcast (May 2020)
- "Managing Teams Remotely Part One of the Work From Home Series," DRI podcast (March 2020)
- "Beyond Voir Dire: Extra Tools for Getting Inside the Mind of a Juror: Mock Trials, Jury Consultants and More," CLE for Barristers Educational Services (December 2013)
- "Understanding the Reach of the 'Long Arm' of the Law," DRI's Retail and Hospitality Litigation and Claims Management Seminar (May 2013)
- "Ethics: Tripartite Relationship," Cumberland Insurance Coverage Seminar, Cumberland School of Law (December 2012)
- Chair – "DRI annual Young Lawyers Seminar," Miami Beach, Florida (June 2012)
- "Old Wine in a New Bottle: Successful Use of Social Media and Technology Tools to Generate New Business," DRI Rainmaking Seminar (March 2012)
- "Law Firm Profitability," Tennessee Defense Lawyers Association 2011 Spring Seminar, Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, Florida (June 2011)
- "You've Been Invited to Be Someone's Friend: The Impact of Social Networking on the Attorney-Client Relationship," DRI Product Liability Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana (April 2011)



Education

- University of Minnesota School of Law, J.D., 2003, cum laude
- Augustana College, B. A., Government/International Affairs, 1999, cum laude
- University of Economics, Prague, Czech Republic, 1998



Admissions

- Alabama, 2006
- U.S. District Courts for the Northern, Middle and Southern Districts of Alabama, 2006
- Minnesota, 2003
- U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota, 2004
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, 2014
- Eighth Circuit, 2004