

Connor A. Sabatino

Special Counsel

csabatino@foley.com

Madison

608.258.4283



Connor Sabatino is a Distribution and Franchise attorney who provides a mixture of client counseling and litigation defense in a variety of highly regulated industries, including automotive, construction, agriculture, outdoor power, and marine. Connor's national practice involves counseling original equipment manufacturers and suppliers of motor vehicles, construction equipment, agricultural equipment, among others. Connor's experience includes advising clients through complex state regulations, developing and managing dealership networks, and providing litigation defense counsel for clients facing regulatory actions or dealer lawsuits.

Manufacturers and suppliers that sell products through a network of dealerships face a complex array of state regulations that govern licensing obligations and control the relationship with dealerships, often notwithstanding the terms of written agreements due to state statutory nonwaiver provisions. With the electric vehicle transition underway, Connor assists a variety of new market entrants as well as legacy manufacturers making the transition, including those with new business models that involve selling direct to end users without the use of third-party dealership networks.

Connor's work includes standing up new market entrants with dealership agreements, state licensing, and other strategic considerations required to operate within these highly regulated industries. He also works with legacy market participants seeking operational changes to align with developing trends in the industry. This includes identifying new dealership opportunities, counseling on issues with existing dealers, and facilitating dealer terminations. Connor has spent years developing close relationships and direct lines of communication with regulatory leadership in states, in order to assist clients with direct engagement to resolve compliance concerns or explore how modern business models can fit into what are sometimes antiquated state dealer laws.

In addition to traditional automotive, construction, and agricultural OEMs, Connor works with clients in unique segments or on the periphery, including heavy trucks, truck chassis, semitrailers, trailers, medium-duty trucks, multi-stage vehicle manufacturers and upfitters, major component parts, motorcycles, ATVs, and UTVs. The

development of battery technology, battery electric vehicles (“BEVs” or “EVs”), and electrified propulsion systems has blurred the lines between manufacturers and component parts suppliers in ways that state regulations never contemplated, requiring a comprehensive industry understanding to find creative solutions that fit the proverbial square peg of modernization into the round hole of aging regulations. Connor also monitors ongoing state legislative developments, as powerful dealer lobbies continue to build up their walled garden of regulatory capture, including changes to regulations surrounding factory stores, direct sales, warranty reimbursement requirements, online ordering or reservation systems, and more.

When clients face administrative regulatory action or dealership litigation, Connor leverages his extensive litigation background and experience to vigorously defend clients through complex commercial litigation, with a nuanced understanding of the unique risk and exposure profiles that exist under state dealer laws.

Awards and Recognition

- *Thomson Reuters* “Standout Lawyer” – independently rated lawyers (2023)

Affiliations

- Member of the Distribution & Franchise Practice Group, the Manufacturing Sector, and the Automotive Team.

Sectors

- [Automotive](#)
- [Equipment & Industrial Product Manufacturing](#)
- [Manufacturing](#)

Practice Areas

- [Business Litigation & Dispute Resolution](#)
- [Distribution & Franchise](#)
- [Labor & Employment](#)
- [Litigation](#)
- [Privacy, Security & Information Management](#)
- [eDiscovery & Data Management](#)

Education

- University of Wisconsin (J.D., cum laude, 2009)
 - Team member, Mock Trial
 - First-ever first year law student to participate in the Mock Trial competition on behalf of University of Wisconsin Law School
- University of Wisconsin (B.A., 2003)

Admissions



FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

- Wisconsin
- U.S. District Courts, Western District of Wisconsin
- U.S. District Courts, Eastern District of Wisconsin