

Identifying **10** Leading Criminal Defense Attorneys

White-collar crime is a growth industry. From Enron to Jack Abramoff, from Sarbanes-Oxley to the popular view at the Justice Department that corporations have an obligation to help the government ferret out wrongdoing, who can doubt it?

And while Wall Street may be the most target-rich environment for prosecutors, Washington, D.C., is increasingly where big-name defendants are turning to find that special someone with the right stuff.

So there are some hard choices in coming up with a list of the leading white-collar criminal defense attorneys in the D.C. area. How does one choose? Most hard-nosed reputation as a litigator? Most frequently at trial? Most likely to win at trial? Best able to prevent clients from being indicted or from going to trial? Most capable of preserving the corporate entity, even if it means losing a few executives along the way?

The answer is yes—to all.

We begin the fourth year of *Legal Times*' Leading Lawyers series with a report on Washington, D.C., attorneys who specialize in white-collar criminal defense. Every time we've compiled one of these lists, some very experienced, very successful lawyers have missed the cut. So, on this occasion, somebody suggested that *Legal Times* should skip the top 10 and write about the next 10. Or 15.

Well, it's a creative idea. But just wait for the phone calls: "How dare you include me? Why wasn't I in the group too good to mention?"

So we did it the old-fashioned way—we chose 10 go-to attorneys. Listed in alphabetical order. With no disrespect intended to the talented next 20. Or 25.



White-Collar Criminal Defense

A Practice Focus

How did *Legal Times* winnow down this list? We solicited suggestions from readers and reporters. Then freelance journalist M.J. Zuckerman called a raft of experts in criminal defense work for their thoughts. And then we winnowed again.

To learn more about the Leading Lawyers series, including how to nominate attorneys for future reports, visit www.legaltimes.com.

Leading LAWYERS

Ten of the D.C. Area's Top Criminal Defense Attorneys

William Taylor III Zuckerman Spaeder

William Taylor III espouses a bumper-sticker approach to white-collar defense work. "Successful defenses are built on a handful, or fewer, themes," says Taylor, a partner at D.C.'s Zuckerman Spaeder. "If you can't explain your defense in less than five minutes, in three or four sentences, your defense simply won't hold up."

Our current too-much-information age is making it increasingly difficult to distill any concise statement from the mountains of material that accompany a major trial. Yet it's that kind of distillation that Taylor, 61, and his team have raised to the level of an art, according to observers and clients.

"As a lawyer, he works harder than any person, harder than any team, I have ever seen in my career in law and business," says Thomas Welch, former president of the Salt Lake City Olympic Committee, whom Taylor successfully defended against federal bribery charges. "As a person, he is the best of the best—scrupulous, honest, and attentive to detail."

Welch recalls that when he went to trial, in 2003, the defense was facing "an excruciating volume of material—more than a million documents." But once digested, it served as fodder for vigorous cross-examination of the government's three key witnesses. The judge entered a judgment of acquittal before the defense even put on their case.

Taylor credits his training in the D.C. Public Defender Service for his legal prowess. "As a public defender, you learn how to prepare very difficult cases better, I think, than prosecutors who are accustomed to winning and having judges on their side," he says. "If your training is to find deficiencies, either factual or legal, in the government's case, it serves you well."

Focus is key in litigation, as it is in Taylor's favorite recreational activity, fly fishing, which he describes as a solitary endeavor where he can stand waist-deep in icy

water admiring his surroundings, as opposed to being knee-deep in documents besieged by attorneys.

Currently, Taylor is representing former Wal-Mart Vice Chairman Thomas Coughlin on wire-fraud and tax-evasion charges. In the past he guided the late Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) through ethics proceedings arising out of the collapse of Lincoln Savings & Loan. He also defended former Clinton White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty and

Democratic National Committee officials in the Whitewater and DNC fund-raising investigations.

Those are the big names, but Taylor's clients are not all white collar. He represents Blanche Taylor Moore, currently on North Carolina's death row for the 1986 arsenic murder of a boyfriend. At trial, evidence was introduced demonstrating that her first husband's death resulted from arsenic and that her second husband was also nearly killed by arsenic.

Taylor is handling her appeal for a nominal state reimbursement. He's arguing that Moore lacked adequate counsel at trial and that the trial judge improperly met with the jury throughout the case, including during deliberations.

Earlier this year, Taylor earned a mistrial when a Philadelphia federal jury deadlocked in the fraud trial of Sherry Freeberry, a former county administrator in New Castle County, Del. A superseding indictment is in the works, and additional charges have yet to be tried, says Freeberry. But as long as she has Taylor at her side, she says, "I'm extremely confident. . . . I know I'll have my name cleared."



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