ANSELMI & CARVELLI LLP

Zachary D. Wellbrock

Partner

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Zachary D. Wellbrock is a Partner at Anselmi & Carvelli, LLP where he represents clients in complex civil litigation and appeals with a focus on First Amendment and defamation law, commercial disputes, and high-stakes business conflicts. Recognized for his intellect, composure, and persuasive advocacy, Zach combines sharp legal strategy with a steady courtroom presence, earning the trust of businesses, professionals, media organizations, and individuals facing disputes with far-reaching reputational or financial consequences.

Zach is particularly experienced in matters involving defamation, free speech, and New Jersey's Anti-SLAPP statute, where he has successfully defended clients against claims aimed at silencing constitutionally protected speech. His results include defeating a defamation lawsuit brought by one former Board of Education member against another former member under the state's Anti-SLAPP law and securing the dismissal of a high-profile defamation and conspiracy action filed against a nonprofit leader, where he partnered with the ACLU of New Jersey to defend speech on a matter of public concern. He has also obtained dismissals and summary judgments in suits against community advocates, employers, and media organizations.

Beyond his First Amendment practice, Zach has extensive experience with business litigation, including in the Chancery Division and the Complex Business Litigation Part in New Jersey as well as the Commercial Division in New York. He represents individuals and businesses of all sizes across industries, including real estate, construction, family investment entities, energy, health care, and franchising, in disputes involving the New Jersey Revised Uniform Limited Liability Company Act, the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act, breach of contract, franchise practices, false advertising, and professional liability claims.

Zach has been recognized by *The Best Lawyers in America®* for Commercial Litigation and by *Super Lawyers®* in New Jersey and New York for Business Litigation. He has lectured on defamation and media law, serving as a panelist for the New Jersey State Bar Association and as a guest lecturer at Rutgers Law School.

A frequent writer on media and First Amendment law, Zach contributed annual updates to the Media Law Resource Center surveys on New Jersey libel and employment privacy law from 2017 to 2021, and he co-authored the firm's widely read alert, *'New Jersey Bolsters First Amendment with Anti-SLAPP Law."*

Representative Matters

Defamation, Media, First Amendment Law

- Successfully obtained dismissal with prejudice of a multi-defendant defamation action against media companies, with the court holding that the challenged statements were protected opinion based on disclosed facts and that the plaintiff failed to allege actual malice.
- Defeated defamation lawsuit against a member of a condominium homeowners' association by the former attorney for the association. The lawsuit was quickly withdrawn after our motion to dismiss was filed.
- Defeated defamation lawsuit brought by a former Board of Education member under New Jersey's Anti-SLAPP statute. The three defendants, including a former Board of Education member, were sued for defamation after publicly voicing support for a high school principal amid a local controversy. The plaintiff, also a former Board member, alleged that our clients falsely implicated her in the principal's arrest, which were later dropped. The court granted our motion to dismiss the case in its entirety, finding that the suit targeted constitutionally protected speech on a matter of public concern.
- Won summary judgment dismissing defamation claims against our client arising from a negative employment reference. The plaintiff had also alleged tortious interference. The court agreed that the claim did not warrant a jury trial and that judgment in our client's favor was required.
- Defeated speech-based claims filed by a public official against our client, who was a member of the community who had been vocal and critical at public meetings and online. The public official also alleged tortious interference and invasion of privacy. The court granted our motion to dismiss most of the case, and the remaining portions of the complaint were withdrawn shortly thereafter.
- Defeated defamation and false light invasion of privacy lawsuit filed by a local official against a community member, obtaining dismissal following a motion that led to the quick withdrawal of the lawsuit.
- Obtained a pre-answer dismissal of a defamation and conspiracy lawsuit filed by a former city manager and mayoral candidate against the director of a non-profit organization who made comments to local news media about the legality of certain disbursements of funds by the city. Our firm worked with the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, serving as pro bono outside counsel.
- Submitted an amicus curiae brief on behalf of a group of prominent academics in the field of political science in connection with a pending appeal that involves the question of whether New Jersey's ban on so-called "fusion voting" violates the right of political association under our state constitution.

Commercial Litigation

- Successfully defended our clients, a family-owned group of investment entities, in an eight-day trial, securing dismissal of all minority oppression claims against our clients, dissociation of the opposing members from the LLCs, and a court-ordered buyout of their interests on our clients' proposed valuation and terms.
- Successfully secured a unanimous New Jersey Supreme Court victory reinstating summary judgment in favor of our client and establishing that personal liability for corporate debt under a guaranty requires clear and unambiguous intent. This decision sets an important precedent for contract enforcement and personal liability across New Jersey.

- Secured summary judgment in favor of our client, a real estate brokerage, dismissing all claims related to alleged unpaid commissions based on the lack of any existing agreement for those sales.
- Successfully obtained dismissal of a lender liability lawsuit against a mortgage finance company, demonstrating that the claims were barred by the economic loss doctrine and lacked any "ascertainable loss" required for a consumer fraud claim.

Consumer Fraud Act Litigation

- Representation of Real Estate salesperson facing fraud and Consumer Fraud Act claims. We successfully secured a trial victory, proving that no misrepresentation took place.
- Representation of three real estate brokers/salespersons against allegations of breach of contract, fraud and violation of the Consumer Fraud Act in connection with a real estate transaction. We moved for and obtained dismissal of all charges on the basis that the brokers had made no misrepresentations and had disclosed all material information resulting in a dismissal of all claims and allegations against our clients.

Practice Areas

- Appeals
- Commercial Litigation
- Defamation, Media & First Amendment Law
- Product Liability & Defense
- Franchise Litigation
- Employment Counseling
- Alternative Dispute Resolution

Education

- Cornell Law School, J.D., 2011
- New Jersey Institute of Technology, B.A., *magna cum laude*, 2007

Admissions

- State of New York, 2012
- State of New Jersey, 2011
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit, 2019
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, 2016
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York, 2015
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, 2015
- U.S. District Court, District of New Jersey, 2011

Clerkships

- Hon. Rachel N. Davidson, Superior Court of New Jersey, Civil Division, 2011-2012

Awards

- Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America: Ones to Watch*™
  - Commercial Litigation, 2022-2026
- Listed in *New Jersey Super Lawyers®*
  - Business Litigation, 2019-2027
- Listed in *New York Metro Super Lawyers* ®
  - Business Litigation, 2020-2021, 2024-2026

Speaking Engagements

- "*Bringing Defamation and Trade-Libel Claims in UPEPA States*," Federal Bar Association, June, 2026
- "*How to Bring and Defend a Defamation Lawsuit in New Jersey*," NJSBA, December, 2025
- *'How to Bring and Defend a Defamation Lawsuit in New Jersey,"* NJSBA, December, 2024
- Guest lecturer, Rutgers University School of Law-Newark, *Law and Mass Communication,* 2019

Professional Activities

- The John C. Lifland American Inn of Court
- American Bar Association
- The Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey
- New Jersey State Bar Association
- New York State Bar Association
- Morris County Bar Association
- Hudson County Bar Association

News & Publications

- "NJ Appellate Division's Latest Anti-SLAPP Ruling Highlights Standard for Defamation in Online Marketplace", Quoted in New Jersey Law Journal | Law.com, June 16, 2026
- "NJ Appellate Ruling Emphasizes Broad Applicability of Anti-SLAPP Law", Quoted in New Jersey Law Journal | Law.com, April 2, 2026
- "String of Victorious Law Firm Critics Shows Anti-SLAPP Statute 'Working as Intended,' Attorney Says, Quoted in New Jersey Law Journal | Law.com, January 20, 2026
- Co-author, "UPEPA Turns Two: A Survey of Early Results and Trends in the First Two Years of New Jersey's Anti-SLAPP Statute", New Jersey Law Journal, September 2025.
- Co-author, "New Jersey Bolsters First Amendment with Anti-SLAPP Law," Anselmi & Carvelli LLP Client Alert, October 2023.
- Media Law Resource Center, Survey of New Jersey Libel Law 2021 Update
- Media Law Resource Center, Survey of New Jersey Employment Privacy Law 2021 Update
- Media Law Resource Center, Survey of New Jersey Libel Law 2020 Update
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