

**Stew Schmella**  
**Lanza Law Firm, PC**  
**2502 Algerian Way**  
**Houston, Texas 77007**

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**Summary**

Accomplished attorney with eighteen years of experience representing institutional clients, small businesses, and individuals in civil litigation in Texas and other jurisdictions. Strong background in insurance litigation, personal injury defense, and commercial litigation. Successfully litigated several matters from inception to completion. Admitted to practice law in all Texas state courts, Texas federal district courts, and the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Helping parties resolve civil disputes through mediation.

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**Areas of Expertise**

- Insurance Litigation
  - Personal Injury
  - Professional Negligence
  - Employment Litigation
  - Mediation
  - Commercial Litigation
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**Legal Experience**

Lanza Law Firm, PC

2012-now

*Partner-Mediator*

- Successfully try jury trials and arbitrations as first and second chair.
- Secured million-dollar verdict and judgment following week-long jury trial in Los Angeles against international supermodel and management company for breach of contract.
- Obtained defense verdict on behalf of insurance agent in first party insurance dispute following seven-day jury trial.
- Secured defense verdict following jury trial involving allegations against apartment complex for failing to prevent attack on invitee.
- Obtained defense verdict as first chair in jury trial within one month of joining firm.

- Successfully obtained summary judgment on behalf of owner of historic hotel in case involving allegations of premises liability.
- Successfully obtained summary judgment on behalf of insurance agency in the United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky.
- Successfully obtained summary judgment on behalf of premises owner in case involving death at premises.
- Defend insurance agents and agencies in negligence actions related to procurement of policies.
- Represent businesses in wide variety of personal injury matters, from slip and fall to commercial trucking incidents involving fatalities and significant injuries.
- Represent insurers and agents in first-party property insurance matters.
- Analyze complex insurance coverage and contractual indemnity issues.
- Represent businesses in hotly contested commercial disputes.
- Represent creditors' interest in bankruptcy matters.
- Advise clients prior to litigation, including drafting detailed legal opinions, interviewing witnesses, and conducting Examinations Under Oath.
- Negotiate favorable settlements on behalf of clients.

Leyh & Payne, LLP

2011-2012

*Attorney*

- Tried wrongful foreclosure lawsuit as first chair within three months of joining firm.
- Successfully enforced promissory notes and guaranty agreements on behalf of financial institutions by obtaining judgments and pursuing collection efforts.
- Obtained summary judgments in multiple matters on behalf of law firm specializing in representing mortgage servicers.
- Aggressively defended financial institutions and banking clients in fraud action.

Nistico, Crouch & Kessler, P.C.

2007-2011

*Associate*

- Handled active docket of first-party insurance claim matters, from inception to completion, arising out of Hurricanes Ike and Katrina.
- Key member of team who secured defense verdict following a two-week trial in federal court in New Orleans involving allegations multi-million dollar insurance bad faith arising out of Hurricane Katrina.
- Acted as second chair in arson trial concerning insurance policy benefits.

- Secured dismissals on behalf of engineers in professional malpractice actions through aggressive motion practice.
- Successfully obtained dismissal on behalf of insurance carrier due to the insured's failure to comply with policy conditions.
- Achieved summary judgment based upon the insured's execution of a policyholder's release before filing suit.
- Advised clients prior to litigation, including drafting detailed legal opinions and conducting Examinations Under Oath.
- Negotiated favorable settlements on behalf of clients.

Bracewell & Giuliani LLP

2005-2007

*Associate*

- Represented health insurance and life insurance carriers in first party claims litigation.
- Obtained summary judgment on behalf of insurer in ERISA matter.
- Member of team that investigated Fortune 500 Company to ensure compliance with federal securities regulations and Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

Beirne, Maynard & Parsons, LLP

2001-2005

*Associate*

- Tried NASD securities fraud arbitration as second chair, resulting in recovery for client/investor.
- Analyzed first-party and third-party insurance claims to identify coverage issues and make recommendations to client.
- Tried lawsuit as first chair before Justice of the Peace.
- Handled active docket of silicosis cases on behalf of sand supplier.
- Represented trustee in bankruptcy adversary proceedings to maximize recovery for bankruptcy estate.

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## Education

University of Houston Law Center

1998-2001

Doctor of Jurisprudence, *magna cum laude*

GPA: 3.37/4.0

- Order of the Coif
- Order of the Barons

Rice University

1994-1998

Bachelor of Arts, Political Science

GPA: 3.33/4.0

- President's Honor Roll
- Manager and Bartender, Willy's Pub

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**Professional Awards, Associations and Activities**

- Texas Rising Star in 2005 and 2010.
- Completed 40-hour University of Houston Law Center mediation training in 2012.
- Member, Houston Bar Association, Texas Association of Defense Counsel, and CLM.