

philadelphia life

Never shy about taking on challenging cases, Philadelphia trial lawyer **Michael T. van der Veen** leads the fight in some of the most important legal and social issues of our time.

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Mike with his best friend, Justice

America's LAWYER

BY MATT COSENTINO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF ANDERSON

NEVER SHY ABOUT TAKING ON CHALLENGING CASES, PHILADELPHIA TRIAL LAWYER **MICHAEL T. VAN DER VEEN** LEADS THE FIGHT IN SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF OUR TIME.

A lawyer's career is defined by his clients and their causes. Judging by Mike van der Veen's notable accomplishments in high-profile cases, it's hard to argue with his track record of success.

van der Veen has become known as the attorney who never has been afraid to take on the most challenging cases, fight for social change, or represent the marginalized. He continues to extend his reach into multiple facets of the law and exert his influence on important issues that will influence the country for generations to come. In criminal

defense, civil litigation, and business disputes—van der Veen is committed to protecting his clients. In cases torn from today's headlines—election law, vaccine litigation, even representing the President of the United States—van der Veen's pursuit of justice never falters.

Nor does his passion for his profession.

"Every day is intellectually stimulating and professionally challenging, and a whole heck of a lot of fun. I always wanted to be a lawyer, ever since I was a kid. I don't know what the inspiration was; I saw lawyers as people who do the helping. I have an inner desire to help people."

It's no surprise that van der Veen set his sights on becoming an attorney who could make a difference. His tireless work ethic, loyalty to clients, and ability to continually adapt to the legal landscape confirms he chose the right path.



“It’s meaningful for us to work on cases that are part of the national conversation.”

—MICHAEL T. VAN DER VEEN



At the Forefront

van der Veen started his career in Chicago, where he cut his teeth as a criminal defense lawyer. Just five years out of law school, before his thirtieth birthday, he played a critical role in a landmark case involving Jon Stuen-Parker, founder of the National AIDS Brigade, and one of the first people in the country to establish a needle exchange program. At the time, it was illegal to possess hypodermic needles in Illinois, so Stuen-Parker forced his own arrest to challenge the law, and van der Veen employed the necessity defense to win his acquittal and eventually decriminalize possession of hypodermic needles to help stop the spread of AIDS.

Upon moving to Philadelphia and founding his own law firm—van der Veen, Hartshorn & Levin—he continued to work on complex cases and grow his practice

areas. A team of a dozen lawyers with nearly 175 years of combined experience specialize in everything from personal injury, civil rights, and family law to criminal defense, business litigation, and more. He has won multimillion-dollar jury verdicts in both state and federal courts and has won not guilty verdicts in every crime ranging from murder to embezzlement.

“Certainly, I’ve always wanted to have a diverse practice, and certainly it has evolved over time. I did start out my first six years doing exclusively criminal defense work and really honed my trial skills early on at a busy private practice. Learning to try cases in the legendary 26th & Cal was critical to the development of my career. When I came to Philadelphia, I added plaintiffs’ personal injury litigation. As my client base grew, my clients needed a commercial litigator, so I acquired the necessary skills. Every time I add a practice area, it strengthens our law firm and strengthens our clients as well.”

van der Veen is especially proud to be at the forefront of important social issues affecting the country. He considers the firm’s pro bono work and charitable service to be the hallmark of his career.

“It’s meaningful for us to work on cases that are part of the national conversation. We’ve done a lot of vaccine litigation, and we’ve been on the cutting edge. We opposed the closing and/or restriction of the U.S. Post Office for free and fair elections. We’ve addressed all kinds of issues, and we’re guided by our social conscience. Our pro bono work is food for the soul of our firm.”

van der Veen and his firm took center stage in 2021 when representing Donald J. Trump in the forty-fifth President’s second impeachment trial, in which he was acquitted. Defending the U.S. Constitution on the floor of the United States Senate is a memory van der Veen will treasure for the rest of his life.

“It was an incredible experience to know you were part of history, and that the work that we did in defending the Constitution was impactful to the running of government in the future.”

Whether he’s representing a U.S. President, a well-known executive or an everyday American far from the public eye, van der Veen never changes his approach. His methods are guided by the principles of natural law and a belief in counseling clients holistically. He sees one of his greatest strengths as the ability to look beyond a certain legal matter to focus on the whole person he’s

representing.

His philosophy shows why van der Veen has been named a Pennsylvania Super Lawyer for 18 consecutive years, and this year was named a finalist for *The Legal Intelligencer’s* 2022 Pennsylvania Attorney of the Year Award. He did not anticipate the honor.

“It was a hot-button year for me and the firm; there was so much going on and we were in the center of controversies in a number of different cases. I didn’t think anybody would consider nominating me because the issues are inherently divisive. I was surprised and pleased. Recognition from one’s peers is always appreciated.”

Not that any award will ever change his commitment to advocating for clients and being their voice in a time of need.

“It is always a privilege and solemn responsibility to represent our clients. As this law firm grows, we will be able to increase that responsibility and excel in all of the areas of law that are most critical to our clients and their families.” ■

→ van der Veen, Hartshorn & Levin

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