

Scott E. Thomas | Senior Principal

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A former Federal Election Commission (“FEC”) Chairman, Scott Thomas focuses his political law practice on campaign finance, ethics, lobbying, and elections law. His extensive background in the area of political law is a valuable resource in providing guidance and assurance to clients who need to interact with government officials or want to engage politically. His practice group also has expertise in setting up nonprofit organizations and helping them with governance and tax law requirements as they engage in political or lobbying activities.

With more than 30 years of experience in this field, Scott assesses current compliance issues and suggests best practices to ensure adherence to the rules. Given the ever-changing law and its interpretations by regulatory bodies, he provides up-to-date advice that enables businesses, associations, PACs, and others to work successfully with government representatives at the federal, state, or local level.

Scott served as an FEC Commissioner from 1986 to 2006. He was appointed to the FEC for three consecutive terms by Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. He served as chairman in 1987, 1993, 1999, and 2005.

From 1983 to 1986, Scott served as executive assistant to former FEC Commissioner Tom Harris, and from 1980 to 1983 as an FEC assistant general counsel for enforcement. He began his legal career as a staff attorney with the FEC in 1977.

He also has general experience in areas of election law other than campaign finance, stemming from the FEC’s Office of Election Administration and his work with election officials here and abroad. Additionally, his involvement with the Council

on Governmental Ethics Laws and various governmental bodies over the years has provided him with a breadth of knowledge on ethics and lobbying rules.

According to *Chambers USA*, “Sources report that ‘his experience is incredible,’ and add: ‘As a past FEC chairman he wrote the regulations, so he understands them. He is very knowledgeable and his breadth of expertise is unmatched.’”

Outside The Firm

Scott still plays basketball with his law school buddies on Saturday mornings, and is a Washington Wizards fan to the end. He and his wife Elena love to travel to the far reaches of the globe.

Select Engagements

- Assist the Voter Participation Center and Women’s Voices / Women Vote Action Fund to stay informed of election laws in all 50 states, which is critical in light of constant changes in laws affecting registration and voting by minorities, young people, and unmarried people. Also assist with ongoing nonprofit organization governance and tax compliance needs.
- Successfully assisted large corporation with FEC enforcement matter over use of company resources for charitable match program encouraging support of company PAC.
- Successfully assisted large private company with FEC enforcement matter alleging coercive solicitation practices when raising funds for company PAC and various candidates.
- Assist several large corporations with ongoing PAC disclosure and lobbying disclosure at federal and state levels.
- Successfully assisted several companies in merger or spin-off transactions to assure PAC and lobbying disclosure aspects handled properly.
- Assist several government contracting companies with “pay to play” law compliance.
- Assist member of Congress with ethics inquiry before Office of Congressional Ethics and House Ethics Committee.
- Assist media production company with Foreign Agent Registration Act compliance matters.
- Successfully assisted nonprofit organization with rescission of tax penalty for late filings.
- Organized several nonprofit organizations, “superPACs,” and “hybrid PACs” and assured all federal and state filings and governance steps were handled properly.

Admissions

- District of Columbia
- Supreme Court of the United States
- United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

- U.S. District Court - District of Columbia

Memberships

- American Bar Association

Education

- Stanford University, BA
- Georgetown University Law Center, JD

Professional Activities

Scott has served on the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Election Law as well as the Elections Committee of the ABA's Section on Administrative Law and Regulatory Practice.