Stephen R. Berlin

Partner

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Services

Anti-Counterfeiting & Gray Markets

Environment & Product Regulation

Government & Regulatory

Litigation

Industries

Retail & Consumer Goods

Stephen Berlin has significant experience in several areas of environmental law, including environmental litigation, business transactions involving environmental issues and environmental compliance matters. Since joining the firm, he has worked in most areas of environmental litigation, both in federal and state courts with an emphasis on private environmental costs recovery actions and representations of potentially responsible parties at Superfund sites and RCRA issues. Steve has handled matters both at the trial and appellate levels in both federal and state courts. He has handled numerous matters involving plaintiff's claims of injury caused by contamination.

Steve has been lead counsel for some of the largest Brownfields projects in the Southeast U.S. In recent years, he has litigated toxic tort, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) cases in all the district courts of North and South Carolina and successfully argued a case involving the interpretation of CERCLA to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. During the course of this career, he has acted as lead environmental counsel for several multi-million dollar business transactions involving manufacturing concerns throughout the United States.

Steve was recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America*® for Environmental Law in 2027 and the 18 years immediately preceding. He was also named a 2016, 2018 and 2019 "Greensboro Lawyer of the Year" in the area of Environmental Law and a 2020, 2023, 2024 and 2027 "Triad Lawyer of the Year" for Environmental Law by *The Best Lawyers in America*®. Steve has also been recognized in the 2026 and the 17 years immediately preceding editions of *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business* and named to *Business North Carolina's* "Legal Elite" list in 2010 and also in 2017 and the five years immediately preceding and in 2018, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026, he was selected to *Business North Carolina's* "Legal Elite Hall of Fame" in the area of Environmental Law. In 2026 and the five years immediately preceding, Steve was named to *Business North Carolina*'s "Power List". He was recognized among the Triad's "Most Influential" professional executives by the *Triad Business Journal* in 2020 for the eleventh consecutive year. In 2023, Steve was also named a “Triad Power Player” by the *Triad Business Journal* for the fourteenth consecutive year. He has been recognized as a North Carolina "Super Lawyer" by *Super Lawyers* magazine for Environmental Litigation and Land Use/Zoning in 2010 and for Environmental Law in 2010, and again in 2027 and the 15 years immediately preceding, and recognized in *The International Who's Who of Business Lawyers* for 2010 and 2011. Steve was selected as a recipient of the Citizen Lawyer Award in 2023 by the North Carolina Bar Association. He was named one of *North Carolina Lawyers Weekly*'s “Leaders in Law” in 2015. Steve is AV® rated by Martindale-Hubbell.*

Experience

The firm served as lead counsel for Lowe's Home Centers, Inc., in an environmental litigation case regarding property and business damages due to migration of off-site contamination onto Lowe's property.

The firm served as lead counsel for defendant, A.B. Carter, a supplier of spinning accessories throughout the yarn manufacturing sector of the textile industry, in an environmental litigation case brought under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and various state claims. Successfully obtained summary judgment on behalf of defendant totally dismissing them from the case.

Represent property developer, Wake Forest University, in a major research park's negotiations with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to obtain a Brownfields Agreement for property redevelopment. As a result of the negotiations, the property developer was permitted to redevelop the property as the Brownfields process unfolded instead of upon conclusion of the process. We continue to report annual activity for this matter on an on-going basis.

The firm serves as lead counsel on behalf of a paper manufacturing company in environmental complex business litigation regarding a liability dispute associated with the historic mercury contamination and the resulting remediation of the property.

The firm served as lead counsel on behalf of third party defendant, Achieve Bank N.A., and successfully argued the first reported case before the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals regarding the security interest holder exemption from liability for contribution under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

Represented Kim's Greensboro Real Estate, LLC in the redevelopment of property that was the former site of a manufacturing plant for general commercial use as an international marketplace for a variety of ethnic foods and products. The firm assisted Kim's Greensboro Real Estate, LLC with site environmental assessment and remediation issues, and negotiation and implementation of a Brownfields Agreement with the State of North Carolina.

Represented the City of Winston-Salem, North Carolina in writing, obtaining, and implementing its first Brownfields Assessment Grant and its first Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Represented Forsyth County and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in various environmental matters, including the expansion of existing landfills, work issues concerning obtaining water from the Yadkin River, and various Brownfields matters.

Represented Stratford Metal Finishing Inc., an electroplating company, regarding Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) hazardous waste issues in negotiations and litigation with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency resulting in a large reduction of fines against the client company.

Rose Acre Farms, Inc. challenged several proposed water quality requirements contained in a draft operating permit to be issued by the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. After negotiations with the state agency, the client received the necessary operating permit containing suitable conditions.

Represented subsidiary companies of La-Z-Boy Inc. in a large group of de micromis and de minimis parties regarding hazardous waste disposal and Superfund issues at a bankrupt waste disposal site.

Represented Hanesbrands, Inc. as the developer in negotiations with the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources to obtain a Brownfields Agreement for property redevelopment. This was the first time the State of North Carolina had allowed the property owner to be the developer of a Brownfields site with liability protection.

Represented construction company with real property acquisition, site environmental assessment and remediation issues, and negotiation and implementation of a Brownfields Agreement with the State of North Carolina. The subject property was initially the site of a textile manufacturing plant located on approximately 36 acres. The plant had been closed and the entire site was sold to our client. The property was then redeveloped for commercial/mixed retail uses including Circuit City and Costco.

Served as lead counsel for Krispy Kreme Doughnut Corporation in a case that arose from allegations by Fairfax County, Virginia that waste water discharge from a Krispy Kreme Doughnut Corporation doughnut manufacturing plant in Lorton, Fairfax County, Virginia damaged the County's sewer system. Krispy Kreme responded that the county operated its sewer system despite faulty design and construction, and with knowledge that the sewage would become stagnant over time, thereby creating conditions that caused the failure of its system. This was a major Federal Clean Water Act case which was favorably settled for our client.

Representing Arvato Digital Services LLC, a supply chain solutions provider, regarding environmental regulatory permitting and matters associated with air emissions, hazardous waste, stormwater, waste water, and hazardous materials.

Education

Wake Forest University School of Law J.D. (1984) *cum laude*

Wake Forest University B.A. (1981) *magna cum laude,* Phi Beta Kappa

Admissions

North Carolina (1984)

Clerkships

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Professional & Community Activities

Arts Council, Board of Trustees, Chair

North Carolina Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism (CJCP), Member

Law360, North Carolina Editorial Advisory Board (2023-2026)

Winston-Salem Business Inc., Immediate Past Chair

Winston-Salem Business Inc., Board of Directors

Wake Forest Law School, Board of Visitors

Keep America Beautiful®, Board of Directors

University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Board of Trustees

Forsyth Futures, Executive Committee

Piedmont Opera, Board of Directors

Arts Council, CEO Search Committee, Past Chair

Winston-Salem Children's Museum, Founding Board Member

Winston-Salem Children's Museum, Development Committee, Past Chair

Wake Forest University School of Law, Adjunct Professor and Coach of the National Trial Court Team

Forsyth County Bar Association, Past President (2003)

Enrichment Center Board, Past Chair

Rotary Club of Winston-Salem

Insights

News Releases

Kilpatrick Attorneys Once Again Earn Outstanding Recognitions in 2027 Edition of The Best Lawyers in America®

August 20, 2026

News Releases

Kilpatrick Continues Government Relations Team Growth: Jaime Martin Joins as Senior Government Relations Advisor in Seattle

June 9, 2026

News Releases

Kilpatrick Attorneys Earn 102 Rankings in 2026 Chambers USA and Global Guides

June 5, 2026

News Releases

Kilpatrick Attorneys Recognized in Business North Carolina's 2026 Power List

May 12, 2026

News Releases

Kilpatrick Attorneys Named to Law360's 2026 Editorial Advisory Boards

April 6, 2026