

Samuel R. Watkins

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Bio

Owners of some of the world's most famous trademarks trust Sam to protect their valuable brands against sophisticated, large-scale counterfeiting organizations. These organizations fall into the "Investor Class" of counterfeiters, i.e., the financial backers behind the typical counterfeit manufacturing and distribution chain. The Investor Class is generally immune to the effects of street level enforcement, e.g., raids that seize counterfeit product from retail sellers in places like Los Angeles's Santee Alley or New York's Canal Street.

To effect significant and lasting reductions in the numbers of counterfeit goods reaching the consumer, the Investor Class must be persuaded that their risks of copying a particular trademark are too high, and that their corresponding return on investment in that trademark is too low. When this risk/reward inversion happens, the Investor Class makes the rational business decision to redeploy their capital and organizational efforts into other, less-well-protected brands. Sam has developed a particularly efficient and cost-effective approach to persuading the Investor Class to leave his clients' brands alone.

Part of Sam's approach recognizes that large-scale manufacturing and distribution chains must rely on third party service suppliers, such as shipping companies, Customs brokers, freight forwarders, trucking companies, and couriers, to move their goods into the United States and get them into the hands of consumers. Sam has developed innovative and effective strategies to hold these third party service providers accountable when their actions amount to contributory infringement under the federal Lanham Act. As but one example, Sam obtained an \$8 million jury verdict against a Customs broker for assisting others import counterfeit luxury handbags and wallets into the Port of Los Angeles.

Education

- J.D., The National Law Center, George Washington University, 1990
- B.A., United States Coast Guard Academy, 1982

Bar/Court Admissions

- Admitted Washington, 2000
- Admitted California, 2010
- Admitted Virginia, 1990
- Admitted Missouri, 1997
- United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, 2003

- United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, 2018
- United States District Court, Western District of Washington, 2010
- United States District Court, Central District of California, 2011
- United States Bankruptcy Court, Central District of California, 2011
- United States District Court, Northern District of California, 2018

Professional & Civic Involvement

- North American Regional Task Force, International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition, 2017 to Present, *Co-Chair*
- International AntiCounterfeiting Coalition, 2011 to 2017, *Co-Chair Customs Task Force*
- United States Coast Guard Academy, *Admissions Partner*
- Washington State Bar Association, *Member*

Honors, Awards & Special Recognition

- One of “The Most Influential Intellectual Property Attorneys in Los Angeles,” LA Business Journal, 2017
- Southern California Super Lawyer, 2015

Representative Matters

- Worked closely with apparel manufacturer in various litigation matters against large-scale importers of counterfeit denim pants, shoes, and other goods, obtaining significant, deterring settlements against all defendants.
- Represented manufacturer of luxury leather goods in various litigation matters against large-scale importers of counterfeit products, including obtaining an \$8 million jury verdict against a Custom broker for assisting others import thousands of counterfeit handbags and wallets.
- Over a span of years, prosecuted several lawsuits against importers of thousands of units of counterfeit dumbbells and home gyms, including obtaining a decision from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denying bankruptcy relief to one defendant, and forcing the sale of two luxury homes owned by another defendant to satisfy a judgment.
- On behalf of a luxury apparel manufacturer, prosecuted several litigation matters against large-scale importers of counterfeit sheepskin boots, obtaining significant, deterring judgments against all defendants.
- Represented a manufacturer of famous eyewear in various litigation matters against importers of thousands of pairs of famous brand sunglasses, achieving significant settlements against all defendants.
- Worked closely with a consumer products manufacturer to develop and implement a comprehensive and enormously successful strategy to halt the large-scale importation of counterfeit tobacco products into the United States.
- On behalf of manufacturer of famous surf wear, prosecuted litigation case against suppliers and a large retail department store chain for the importation and sale of tens of thousands of pairs of counterfeit boardshorts.

Personal



Sam began his career as a Coast Guard Officer patrolling the Caribbean Sea and the coast of South America interdicting drug smugglers and human traffickers. Afterwards, the Coast Guard sent Sam to law school and made him a JAG Officer. When Sam is not applying his prior law enforcement skills for the benefit of his clients, Sam enjoys spending time with his family, going on long walks, golfing, and watching college football.