

► **Victor J. Pelaez**
SHAREHOLDER

Miami
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Practice

Commercial Litigation
Insurance
Maritime

Admissions

Florida

U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh
Circuit

U.S. District Court
Southern District of Florida
Northern District of Florida
Middle District of Florida

Education

Florida International University
College of Law, J.D.

Florida International University,
B.A. in Philosophy, minor in
Business Administration

Certifications

Board Certified in Admiralty
and Maritime Law, The Florida
Bar

Accolades

Florida Super Lawyers, Rising
Star, 2018 - 2020

South Florida Legal Guide, Top
Lawyers, 2020, 2021

Victor Jose Pelaez is a Shareholder in the firm's Maritime Practice Group in the Miami office. He is Board Certified in Admiralty and Maritime Law by The Florida Bar, the highest evaluation of an attorney's competency, experience and professionalism.

As a trial lawyer, Victor has extensive experience practicing in various areas of civil litigation including maritime and admiralty, insurance defense, business disputes, and international litigation. He has successfully defended the world's largest cruise lines in numerous high-exposure lawsuits and private arbitrations involving catastrophic personal injuries, wrongful death claims, overboard incidents, medical malpractice claims, negligent security and overservice of alcohol claims, and crewmember claims. Victor also has experience representing various other marine industry clients in lawsuits involving business disputes, contract claims, property damage claims, and passenger and crew personal injury claims. He has handled several on-site, post-incident, casualty investigations for his cruise line and marine clients, regularly in conjunction with concurrent, ongoing investigations by the U.S. Coast Guard and other state and federal agencies.

In addition to his vast experience in the maritime field, Victor has also handled numerous other civil lawsuits on behalf of Fortune 500 companies, commercial airlines, national banks, real estate developers, and other local business owners involving breach of contract claims, business torts, copyright infringement claims, construction claims, and real estate disputes. Victor is fluent in Spanish and has experience handling both domestic and cross-border litigation matters for Latin American clients.

Victor has represented clients in state and federal court matters throughout all of Florida and the majority of his practice involves litigating federal cases before the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida. He is admitted to practice in all of the federal district courts in Florida and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Victor has also represented clients in appellate matters before Florida's Third, Second, and Fourth District Courts of Appeal and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

Victor earned his law degree at Florida International University College of Law and his Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and a minor in Business Administration, with honors, from Florida International University. Victor was born and raised in Miami, Florida, and is a graduate of Belen Jesuit High School.

Representative Maritime and Insurance Experience

- Successfully defended major cruise lines and other marine industry clients in numerous federal and state trials, both jury and non-jury, as well as at final arbitration hearings.
- Obtained defense verdict in a two-week federal jury trial involving wrongful death claim brought against a major cruise line under the Death On the High Seas Act (DOHSA) after a passenger went overboard.
- Obtained defense verdict in a one-week federal non-jury trial involving another wrongful death claim brought against a major cruise line under DOHSA after a passenger went overboard. The defense verdict was affirmed on appeal. *Broberg v. Carnival Corp.*, 798 F. App'x 586 (11th Cir. 2020).

Representative Maritime and Insurance Experience

- Obtained favorable awards on behalf of multiple major cruise lines following final arbitration hearings on crewmember claims involving Jones Act negligence, maintenance and cure, medical malpractice, and unseaworthiness.
- Handled immediate, post-incident, shipboard investigation on behalf of a major cruise line following overboard death of a mentally disabled passenger.
- Represented private charter vessel operator in a U.S. Coast Guard investigation regarding overboard incident resulting in death of a passenger.
- Obtained final summary judgment in favor of a foreign shipping company in a federal lawsuit involving arrest of cargo vessel arising from claims for unpaid bunkers. *World Fuel Servs., Inc. v. M/V PARKGRACHT*, 489 F. Supp. 3d 1340 (S.D. Fla. 2020), appeal dismissed, No. 20-14042-DD, 2021 WL 316122 (11th Cir. Jan. 21, 2021).
- Successfully defended major cruise lines in numerous matters arising from claims of alleged shipboard medical malpractice and negligent failure to evacuate as to both passengers and crewmembers.
- Successfully defended major cruise lines in numerous premises liability claims arising from allegations of negligent maintenance and design, over-service of alcohol, and negligent security.
- Successfully defended private university in a premises liability claim arising from alleged negligent security and on-campus sexual assault.

Representative Commercial and Other Experience

- Obtained final summary judgment in favor of a commercial airline client in a federal lawsuit involving claims for damages arising from international transport of frozen cargo. *Underwriters at Int. v. All Logistics Grp., Inc.*, 483 F. Supp. 3d 1199 (S.D. Fla. 2020), appeal dismissed, No. 20-14453-JJ, 2021 WL 2190226 (11th Cir. Mar. 4, 2021).
- Successfully defended developer of a South Florida luxury condominium tower in a lawsuit seeking over \$70 million in damages for alleged copyright infringement over architectural plans. Defended same developer in numerous other lawsuits including an action by former owners to recover over \$40 million in damages for alleged breach of a profit-sharing agreement and other alleged business torts.
- Participated in successful joint defense of a Fortune 500 corporation and two of its officers in a multi-billion dollar environmental damages litigation spanning multiple countries and forums.
- Represented Fortune 500 corporation and largest U.S. bank as its escalated litigation counsel in over 90 lawsuits and three appeals throughout the state of Florida.
- Successfully represented individual investor in FINRA arbitration against a major financial services firm.
- Represented owner of an aircraft in a lawsuit involving alleged breach of an aircraft lease agreement and dispute over possession.

Professional Associations and Memberships

- Florida Bar Admiralty Law Committee
- Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute
- Hispanic National Bar Association
- Cuban American Bar Association
- Dade County Bar Association

Speaking Engagements

- Guest Lecturer, Carnival Cruise Line's Annual Security Conference, 2017, 2018