

Thomas H. Belknap Jr. | Partner
Maritime

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CO-CHAIR, MARITIME PRACTICE GROUP

Tom Belknap is a member of our Maritime Emergency Response Team (“MERT”).

Tom concentrates his practice on international commercial litigation and arbitration, with particular emphasis on the maritime and commodities industries. He also focuses on offshore construction, casualty, and insurance issues. Tom has been involved in a wide variety of domestic and international maritime, commercial, and insurance matters, including:

- Marine casualty and collision cases and vessel limitation of liability actions
- International and domestic commercial contract disputes, including arbitrations under AAA, ICC, SMA, and ad hoc arbitration terms
- Maritime and commodity sale disputes, including arbitrations under SMA, AAA, ICC, and ad hoc arbitration terms
- COGSA and multi-modal cargo damage and loss claims
- Offshore wind and pipeline installation and construction projects and related contracting and insurance issues
- Marine insurance coverage disputes, including protection and indemnity, general commercial liability, marine liability, hull and machinery, cargo, and war-risk insurance coverage issues
- Maritime bankruptcy matters, advising debtors, secured and unsecured creditors, and unsecured creditors’ committees
- Maritime commercial and “treasure” salvage and general average disputes
- Maritime attachment (Rule B) and vessel arrest (Rule C) actions
- Recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitration awards and judgments

Tom is a co-author of *Time Charters* (7th ed. 2014), and he co-authors the annual update to *Benedict on Admiralty, Vol. 3A: The Law of Salvage*. He also authored the chapter titled “Enforcing and Challenging Arbitral Awards” in *Navigating Maritime Arbitration: The Experts Speak* (2019).

Tom has been recognized by *Chambers USA* every year since 2009 as a leading shipping litigation attorney. *Chambers* has stated, “Thomas Belknap is praised for his ‘thoughtful and thorough approach.’ He has expertise across a range of matters including contracts and charter party disputes, casualty litigation and insurance coverage.” *Chambers* further noted that he is “fantastic when it comes to the details of a claim, where you have to go through a complaint, take it to pieces and put it back together again,” and he is “always prepared, articulate, knowledgeable and practical in his approach to running cases.” He is “a rising force—he is hard-working, with a good understanding of the law, particularly cargo matters.” *Chambers* particularly highlighted his “really good connections in the Asian shipping arena.”

Tom is an adjunct professor at New York University Law School, where he teaches a course in Admiralty Law.

Outside The Firm

Tom is an avid sailor, racing one design boats in Connecticut throughout the year, and he also enjoys playing guitar in his band, Small Craft Warning.

Select Engagements

Among others, Tom has represented clients in the following matters:

- A tanker owner, in a NY limitation of liability action in connection with a collision with the USS *John S. McCain* off Singapore in August 2017, defending claims by the United States for approximately \$200 million in property damage claims, death claims on behalf of 10 Navy sailors, and injury claims by 45 Navy sailors.
- A tanker owner, in defense of \$28 million claim by cargo owner for damages allegedly caused by delay in delivering fuel oil cargo to Singapore shortly following COVID-19 pandemic.
- A vessel charterer, in defense of \$39 million wrongful cancellation claim in arbitration and related fraud and RICO litigation against charterer’s corporate affiliates and directors.
- A natural gas utility, in defending two separate claims for damage to major electric transmission cables crossing the Long Island Sound during a marine construction project, and related insurance coverage litigation as an “additional assured” under the contractor’s policies.
- A foreign jack-up barge operator, in negotiations to provide installation services for a U.S. East Coast offshore wind farm installation project.
- Multiple foreign offshore wind service providers, in contract negotiations in

- connection with U.S.-based offshore wind projects.
- A large U.S.-based marine bunker supplier, in connection with a New York litigation arising out of OW Bunker bankruptcy.
- Various commodity traders, in connection with disputes arising under commodity sale contracts.
- A commodities trading company, in defense of claims for “poaching” a trading team from a competitor.
- The unsecured creditors committee, in respect of maritime issues relating to a U.S. Chapter 11 bankruptcy action.
- Numerous debtors, in maritime issues relating to a U.S. Chapter 15 action seeking recognition of foreign bankruptcy proceedings.
- A foreign offshore ice breaking company, on corporate organization and limitation of liability issues.
- A cargo vessel owner, in a collision with a U.S. Navy nuclear submarine.
- Numerous Rule B and Rule C matters, both in obtaining and opposing attachments and arrests.
- Numerous matters seeking recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitration awards and judgments.

Admissions

- Supreme Court of the United States
- Connecticut
- New York
- United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit

Memberships

- Connecticut Maritime Association
- International Bar Association
- Maritime Law Association of the United States

Education

- Tufts University, BA
- Emory University School of Law, JD, with distinction

Recognitions

- 2019–2024, Admiralty and Maritime Law in New York, listed in *Best Lawyers in America*®
- 2009–2024, Transportation: Shipping/Maritime: Litigation Law, listed in *Chambers USA*
- 2018–2024, listed in *The Legal 500 United States*
- 2013–2023, New York Metro “Super Lawyer” in Transportation & Maritime, listed in *Super Lawyers*

- 2024, Global Elite Thought Leader: USA in Shipping, listed in *Who's Who Legal*
- 2023–2024, Thought Leader: USA in Shipping, listed in *Who's Who Legal*
- 2019–2023, Global Leader in Shipping, listed in *Who's Who Legal*
- 2018–2019, listed in Euromoney's *Shipping* and *Best of the Best USA Expert Guides*
- 2015–2018, listed in *Who's Who Legal – Shipping*
- Listed in the *Guide to the World's Leading Shipping and Maritime Lawyers*

Professional Activities

Tom is a member of the International Bar Association, the United States Maritime Law Association, and the Connecticut Maritime Association.