WILKINSON BARKER KNAUER LLP



Jonathan V. Cohen

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Using experience gained from 35+ years in private practice and 5+ years as a government official at The White House and the Federal Communications Commission, Jonathan Cohen is a trusted advisor to a diverse set of clients in the tech, media, and telecom fields. He focuses on issues at the intersection of law, public policy, and new technologies, working with clients ranging from Fortune 50 companies to early-stage firms and from trade associations to non-profit foundations. He has been honored multiple times as a Best Lawyer® by Best Lawyers in America™ and a Washington D.C. SuperLawyer by Thomson Reuters, and he speaks frequently at client seminars and industry events, and in educational settings.

Clients value Jonathan's clear, practical advice regarding how best to advance their legal and business strategies in often complex dealings with other firms and the federal government. He works on transactions (including M&A activity and financing), public policy advocacy before federal and state government agencies, and appellate court representation. Jonathan currently co-chairs the Emerging Issues in Technology Committee and the Southern California Chapter of the FCBA-The Tech Bar® and serves on that organization's Executive Committee. He holds degrees from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Georgetown University Law Center.

Jonathan's career began as a radio news reporter and producer in New York City, where he covered a range of local, national, and international topics. An early-career pivot into law drew him back to Washington, D.C. (his hometown) and to communications law, where for many years he focused on policy matters and transactions in the media and wireless telecom fields, including in senior staff positions at the Federal Communications Commission. More recently, he has advised clients on artificial intelligence and information ecosystem issues and has filed amicus briefs in SCOTUS cases concerning social media content moderation and the regulation of online content. He is a member of the D.C. and U.S. Supreme Court bars.

Jonathan also spends time on pro bono legal matters (primarily in the areas of criminal justice and responsible tech) and is regularly included in the D.C. Bar's Pro Bono Honor Roll. He served as WBK's Finance Partner from 2017 to 2025.

PRACTICE AREAS

Telecommunications and Media
Content Regulation/Section 230
Artificial Intelligence
Broadcast – Radio and Television
Commercial and Technology
Security, Privacy, and Digital Policy
Corporate
Wireless Communications and Spectrum Policy
Privacy and Data Protection
Communications Transactions
Broadband and IP-Enabled Services
FCC Enforcement
Mergers and Acquisitions
Transactions
Infrastructure
Tower Siting and Infrastructure
Enforcement and Investigations

BAR ADMISSIONS

U.S. Supreme Court
District of Columbia

EDUCATION

J.D., Georgetown University Law Center
B.S., Economics, The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Jonathan relocated to California in 2024 and now splits his time between D.C. and Los Angeles.

Representative Engagements

Assisted Cingular Wireless (now AT&T) in a broad range of transactions, including its merger with AT&T Wireless Services, a $1.4 billion spectrum acquisition from NextWave Telecom Inc.; and the acquisition of controlling interests in several affiliates that had acquired licenses with bidding credits under the FCC's rules
Represented Centennial Communications Corp. in its $944 million merger with AT&T Inc.
Represented Atlantic Tele-Network, Inc. (now ATN International, Inc.) in securing approval for its $200 million acquisition of wireless facilities and customers in 26 markets in six states from Verizon Wireless.
Counseled wireless industry players on spectrum policies needed for rollout of commercial mobile broadband services (including 5G services).
Advised a non-commercial television broadcaster on gaining independence from its long-time parent building a for-profit streaming business. Represented the streaming company in a merger in which it joined with another media company.
Obtained state and federal regulatory approvals for numerous media and telecom deals, including spectrum sales and leases, obtaining CFIUS and Team Telecom clearances when needed.
Provided counsel to both broadcast and wireless industry clients on the intricacies of virtually all of the significant spectrum auctions since 1998, including the FCC's innovative broadcast spectrum incentive auction, which repurposed low-band spectrum from television broadcast to mobile broadband use.
Assisted Amtrak in spectrum acquisitions and regulatory approvals in connection with its deployment of the Positive Train Control technology
On behalf of Cingular Wireless (now AT&T), devised and implemented structures to accomplish the unwind of a complex infrastructure-sharing arrangement with T-Mobile USA, a process that involved dozens of agreements and numerous FCC approvals
Devised the template for the first spectrum lease agreements executed under a new FCC policy in 2003. Many elements of these spectrum leases have become the standard in the industry.
Senior Federal Communications Commission staff positions in the Chairman's Office, Office of Plans and Policy, and Wireless Telecommunications and Mass Media Bureaus (1993-1998) – advised two FCC Chairmen; co-authored rules for FCC spectrum auctions and directed the FCC's first broadband PCS auction, which generated $7.7 billion for the U.S. Treasury and brought digital technology to the mobile phone industry; and interfaces with industry and FCC staff in policy development regarding wireless competition and digital broadcasting.
Advisor, Clinton for President campaign (1992) and Presidential Transition (1992-1993); Director of Outreach for now-U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's first Congressional campaign (2002) (while on leave of absence from WBK).
Associate in two Washington, D.C. communications law firms (1982-1991)
News Reporter, WXLO-FM, New York, NY (1978-1979)

Honors

Recognized in Best Lawyers for Communications Law (2025, 2026)
Washington, DC SuperLawyer (2013-2025)
Recommended by Legal 500 US (2017-2019)

Martindale Hubbell AV® Preeminent Peer Review Rating (ongoing)
One of 86 Attorneys Nationwide Named to the BTI Transactions All-Star Team (2008)
Member, Tech, Media and Telecom Policy Group, 2008 Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama
Private Sector Advisor – U.S. Department of State delegation to the World Telecommunications Development Conference, Istanbul, Turkey (2002)
Recipient of the “Hammer Award” from Vice President Al Gore’s National Performance Review for Reinventing Government (1995)
Dealmaker of the Month, The American Lawyer magazine (May 1995)
Member, FCBA – The Tech Bar

Pro Bono and Volunteer Projects

Advising GLIA Foundation in fostering education and outreach with the goal of creating more human-centric technologies and markets, and the GliaNet Alliance, which unites forward thinking companies and organizations committed to ethical, trustworthy, and accountable technology practices
Through the Maryland Parole Partnership, secure parole release for a person who had been incarcerated in the Maryland prison system for 50 years for murder.
Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll High Honors Recipient (2021, 2023), Honor Roll Recipient (2024)