



## John B. Gessner

**Partner**

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**Whether our hospitality clients are trying to find property, close a big deal, or navigate a number of complex operational issues, I regularly serve in an outside general counsel and trusted advisor capacity—solving their problems before they even rise to that level, and assisting them with anything they might need, to quote that old, colloquial phrase, “from soup to nuts.” They know me as someone who gets things done.**

John is an experienced food & beverage and hospitality lawyer who handles anything the sophisticated clients in these sectors may need—including strategic planning and financing; corporate formation and governance; real estate and leasing matters; employment and human resources; franchising; liquor laws and licensing; litigation; and restructuring. Most recently, he has been helping restaurant chain development clients and others in this resilient industry to navigate the numerous challenges posed by the pandemic, as well as to find opportunities to develop new venues and markets. “There is a real hunger for that, after what we have collectively undergone,” he says.

Prior to joining Carrington Coleman, John served for more than a decade as general counsel to both national franchisees and franchisors, as well as restaurant development and management companies—where he gained an intimate understanding of the needs of in-house hospitality counsel and how best to meet them. “In that role,” he explains. “I was actually a former firm client. I hired them for their expertise, and now I feel that I’m adding to it.” Before moving in-house, John also spent 17 years at another law firm, representing hospitality clients in commercial and employment litigation.

Former president and chair of the Texas Restaurant Association, John has been a member of that trade



organization's executive board for well over a decade and has a knack for bringing people together and achieving consensus. Clients rely on these abilities to help them work through the complicated federal, state, and local government regulations that threaten to restrict critical operations. In fact, John led the lobbying team that recently secured permanent status for Texas's formerly temporary COVID-19-related regulations permitting restaurants to serve alcohol "to go," which will significantly impact these businesses' bottom line as the industry continues to recover.

John is a frequent lecturer on hospitality topics and since 2005 has been a regular participant in the Cornell University Hospitality Roundtable. He has also taught business law courses at Brookhaven Community College.

## Areas of Focus

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### Industries

- Art, Sports, and Entertainment
- Financial Services
- Hospitality
- Manufacturing
- Real Estate and Construction

### Services

- Banking and Finance
- Corporate and Mergers & Acquisitions
- Employment
- Securities and Directors & Officers
- Real Estate

### Education

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- Tulane University, J.D., 1984
- University of St. Thomas, B.A., 1981, summa cum laude

### Admissions

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- Texas, 1984
- U.S. Court of Appeals Fifth Circuit
- U.S. District Court Northern District Texas
- U.S. District Court Eastern District Texas





- U.S. District Court Southern District Texas
- U.S. District Court Western District Texas

## Leadership

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- Member: Texas Bar Association
- Member: Dallas Bar Association
- Greater Dallas Restaurant Association
  - Board of Directors and Executive Committee, 2008-2019
- Texas Restaurant Association
  - Immediate Past President, 2021
  - President, 2019-2020
  - President Elect, 2018
  - Vice President, 2017
  - Secretary, 2016
  - Board of Directors, 2009-2019
  - Executive Committee, 2010-2019
- Texas Restaurant Association PAC
  - Chairman, 2010-2011, 2016-2019

## Recognition

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- Lawdragon 500, Leading Litigators in America, Commercial Litigation, 2024
- *Best Lawyers in America*, 2024, Commercial Litigation

## Outside of Work

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Food is a big part of my personal life, as well as my professional one. Many of my relatives were talented commercial chefs and, on an amateur basis, I can hold my own in the kitchen as well. Part of my family is from France, and I have always gravitated towards French cuisine and techniques (my friends and family regularly request my Chateaubriand). I am also a passionate outdoorsman and, perhaps most important, a dedicated husband and father to two beautiful daughters.