

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Judges honor Wisconsin attorneys for top appellate briefs

*What makes a winning legal argument? A panel highlights clarity, structure, and persuasive writing*

**MADISON, Wis. (May 7, 2026)** — A panel of Wisconsin judges, including a former state Supreme Court chief justice, has identified four attorneys whose appellate briefs stood out for clarity, organization, and persuasive legal writing.

The honors come from the State Bar of Wisconsin’s Appellate Practice Section biennial Best Briefs competition, which evaluates submissions for clarity, depth of analysis, and persuasiveness.

The sixth competition included 36 anonymized entries filed between Jan. 1, 2024, and Dec. 31, 2025. Finalists were reviewed by a panel that included former Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Patience Roggensack, Judge Michael Fitzpatrick, and Judge Jeffrey Davis.

“It continues to be a strong competition with a significant number of entries as well as strongly written briefs,” the reviewers said.



*Christa  
Westerberg*



*Leslie Ann  
Freehill*

Winners were:

**Christa Westerberg** of Pines Bach LLP and **Leslie Anne Freehill**, deputy legal counsel to Gov. Tony Evers, for their response brief in *Kohler v. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*.

“This brief followed appellate practice rules to a ‘T,’ used concise sentences, well-organized paragraphs, and clear legal arguments. It was respectful in tone, with no unnecessary attacks on the opposing party or counsel,” the reviewers said. “It is a compelling statement of facts that uses subtle persuasion even in reciting witness testimony.”



*Charlotte  
Gibson*



*Colin  
Roth*

**Charlotte Gibson**, senior counsel for appeals and complex litigation with the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and **Colin Roth**, assistant attorney general with the DOJ’s Special Litigation and Appeals Unit, for their opening brief in *Evers v. Marklien*.

“This brief presents a scholarly explication on constitutional separation of powers, and its superb organization contributes to a forceful, clear, and persuasive argument,” the reviewers said. “The writing is good, with short, clear sentences that provide good background on the facts and issues and the application of law. It has a nice flow to it in that the arguments move logically throughout.”

—More—

**###**

**ABOUT THE STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN**

The [State Bar of Wisconsin](#) is the integrated professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 25,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit [wisbar.org](#).

**CONTACT**

Mike Wiltse, PR Manager, 608-250-6025, [mwiltse@wisbar.org](mailto:mwiltse@wisbar.org).