

Sean C. Cenawood

Partner



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Overview

Sean Cenawood, the former Chief of the Civil Frauds Unit in the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, is a member of Dentons' Litigation, White Collar and Government Investigations, and Health Care practices. He focuses on government and internal investigations, as well as complex civil litigation. Sean has handled dozens of major investigations and litigations involving hospitals, pharmaceutical manufacturers, physicians, importers, medical device manufacturers, sports stadiums, recipients of federal stimulus monies and mortgage brokers, as well as a variety of other enforcement actions brought by the government.

Sean is well-versed in the government's anti-fraud efforts, having regularly directed the investigative activities of law enforcement agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, the National Science Foundation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and various other agencies' offices of inspector general.

Sean has also coordinated investigations with the New York State Attorney General, various states' Medicaid fraud control units, the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) and President Obama's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force.

Recognition

Honors and Awards

- *Best Lawyers in America*, Health Care Law, 2020–present
- Attorney General's Award, the highest honor conferred by the United States Department of Justice
- Henry L. Stimson Award, given by the Bar Association of the City of New York to outstanding Assistant US Attorneys in the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York
- New York Federal Executive Board Award, conferred for excellence in public service and in recognition of outstanding accomplishments and leadership

- "New York Super Lawyer - Criminal Defense: White Collar," *Super Lawyers*, 2014

Insights

- **"Revisiting the Naughty List: HHS-OIG and the 'Heightened Scrutiny List',"** *Dentons On Call*, February 6, 2024
- Co-author, "FCA Liability in a Post-PPACA World," *Law360*, February 2011
- Co-author, "A Conversation About Fraud and Abuse," *Health Law Journal*, The Health Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, Vol. 14, No. 2, Fall 2009

Activities and Affiliations

Presentations

- Speaker, "Medicare risk adjustment and the False Claims Act," AHLA Annual Meeting, June 27-29, 2022
- Presenter, **"One-hour webinar examining the now-uncertain future of 'implied certification',"** March 15, 2016
- Speaker, "False Claims Litigation" Lorman Education Services seminar, New York, NY, October 14, 2011
- Speaker, "Healthcare Reform: Trends in DOJ Fraud Enforcement," webinar, April 21, 2011
- Speaker, "The False Claims Act and Health Care Fraud," HCCA's 15th Annual Compliance Institute, Orlando, April 10, 2011
- Speaker, "Civil and Criminal Health Care Fraud Prosecutions Under the False Claims Act," New York City Bar Association, Health Care Fraud Section
- Speaker, "Challenges and Pitfalls Facing Medical Professionals With Respect to Health Care Fraud," various medical schools
- Speaker, "Relator Challenges to Settlements Reached Between Government and Defendants in False Claims Act Actions," Taxpayers Against Fraud Conference, Washington, DC
- Instructor, US Department of Justice National Advocacy Center, on numerous topics including: Hot Topics in Affirmative Civil Enforcement; Jury Selection; Civil Rights; ADA Compliance at Stadiums, Arenas and Other Sporting Venues
- Panelist, "Recent Amendments to the False Claims Act," presented by the American Bar Association, National Institute on Health Care Fraud
- Panelist, "False Claims Act Developments and Their Application to Health Care Fraud Enforcement," Health Care Compliance Association, Compliance Institute

Prior and Present Employment

Prior to joining Dentons, Sean served 13 years as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of New York, including supervisory tenures as Affirmative Civil Enforcement Coordinator, Health Care Fraud Coordinator, Senior Litigation Counsel, and Chief of the Immigration Unit. His last position with the government was as Chief of the Civil Frauds Unit, where he oversaw investigations of large-scale and sophisticated financial frauds, including health care fraud, mortgage fraud, pharmaceutical fraud, bank fraud, procurement fraud, grant fraud, and fraud in connection with federal monies and spending allocated under various stimulus and economic recovery legislation such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and TARP.

During the two and a half years in which he had responsibility for supervising the entire affirmative civil enforcement

practice of the US Attorney's Office, Sean oversaw the recovery of close to \$400 million. As such, Sean has considerable experience with the enforcement of federal anti-fraud laws and well understands the concerns that arise when the government pursues civil remedies in lieu of, or in addition to, sanctions under the criminal laws, including the government's ability to freeze assets, broad pre-complaint discovery by the government, the lower standard of proof compared with the standard for criminal fraud cases, and the wide range of relief available to the government, such as the ability to seek statutory penalties, treble damages, forfeitures, receiverships and other far-reaching injunctive relief.

During his government service, Sean tried almost two dozen cases, all but one of which ended in a government verdict or resolution on terms favorable to the government. Sean has also argued numerous appeals before the United States Court of Appeals. He was the lead or co-lead counsel in high-profile cases such as the ground-breaking housing settlement of whistleblower allegations that Westchester County falsely certified to the government that it had acted to "affirmatively further fair housing," the civil rights investigation that prompted the owners of the new Yankee Stadium to create one of the most accessible sporting venues in the nation for persons with disabilities, and the litigation that resulted in the owners and operators of the iconic Madison Square Garden agreeing to undertake extensive renovations to achieve similar accessibility.

Areas of focus

Practices

- **Appellate Advocacy**
- **Commercial Litigation**
- **Compliance and Risk Management**
- **Congressional Investigations (United States)**
- **Fraud, Corruption and Asset Recovery**
- **Global Anti-Corruption**
- **Internal Investigations**
- **Litigation and Dispute Resolution**
- **Securities and Shareholder Litigation**
- **State Attorneys General (United States)**
- **White Collar and Government Investigations**
- **Government Contracts - US**

Industry sectors

- **Government**
- **Health Care**
- **Life Sciences and Health Care**
- **Litigation, Arbitration, Mediation and other Dispute Resolution**

Admissions and qualifications

- New York

- US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit
- US District Court for the Eastern District of New York
- US District Court for the Southern District of New York
- US District Court for the Western District of New York