Michael T. Clear

PARTNER

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Michael is the Chair of our Private Client Services Department where he leads our group of over 30 lawyers and allied professionals. As a Partner in the firm's Private Client Services Department, Michael regularly counsels clients on the far-reaching financial implications of estate planning, estate and trust administration, probate litigation, and business succession planning. Yet he is also a trained counselor with insight into the family dynamics these matters can effect. Known for his empathy and good humor, he helps clients take prudent action in the face of indecision, hopefully resolving contested issues before litigation. He is also a member of wiggin(x).

Michael's estate planning practice includes assisting individuals and families in tax-efficient and practical estate and gift planning, including the preparation of wills, revocable living trusts, insurance trusts, and entities to own special family assets such as vacation homes and collections.

He guides fiduciaries and beneficiaries through estate settlement and trust administration matters. His estate and trust administration practice often dovetails with his probate litigation experience, where he advises clients in will and trust construction cases, contested accountings, fiduciary removal proceedings, payment of unpaid claims, and conservatorship and guardianship matters.

Michael also assists business owners with succession planning, by presenting to family groups on business/estate planning matters and by preparing business entities, shareholders' agreements, buy-sell agreements, and grantor-retained annuity trusts. He often facilitates the sale or purchase of business assets.

Michael has recently:

- Helped improve the trustee/beneficiary relationship for a $60 million family trust, increasing distribution frequency and securing a large distribution for beneficiaries.
- Facilitated the smooth transition of trustees for another trust, and secured court approval of a new distribution plan.
- Presented on family governance and buy-sell agreements to a multi-generation-owned family business.

- Counseled numerous clients about the implications of new tax reform legislation.

Michael is a fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel and is a frequent speaker on trust and estate strategies at bar association and continuing education events. He is a member of the Probate and Estates Committee of the Connecticut Bar Association and a former Co-chair of the Probate and Estates Section of the Fairfield County Bar Association and the President of the Fairfield Chapter of the Exit Planning Exchange (CT XPX).

Michael received his J.D. *magna cum laude* from the Quinnipiac University School of Law, where he served as Executive Managing Editor of the *Quinnipiac Probate Law Journal*. At graduation, he was the recipient of the Academic Excellence Award, Superior Classroom Performance Award, and CATIC Foundation Award. He received numerous academic excellence awards during law school.

Michael received his B.A. in political science from the University of Richmond. He holds a M.Ed. focusing on college student personnel from the University of Maryland. A former Division I college baseball player, Michael coaches in the Fairfield American Little League and continues to play baseball and golf when possible. Michael lives in Fairfield, Connecticut with his wife Melissa and three children.

Education

- Quinnipiac University School of Law (J.D., 2005)
    - magna cum laude
- University of Maryland (M. Ed., 2000)
- University of Richmond (B.A., 1998)
    - Political Science

Bar Admissions

- Connecticut

Memberships and Affiliations

- Connecticut Bar Association
- Connecticut Chapter of the Exit Planning Exchange (CT XPX)
    - Board of Directors
- Fairfield County Bar Association
    - Co-Chair, Probate and Estates Section

Publications

May 28, 2026
Section 645 Election: A Quietly Powerful Tool in Estate Administration

January 21, 2026
Partners Michael Clear and Erin Nicholls Featured in WealthCounsel Quarterly: “Trustee Removal: Practical Guidance for Planners and Litigators”

December 16, 2025
Private Client Services 2025 Year-End Advisory

November 20, 2025
Trust Assets Deemed “Marital Property” in Divorce Judgment: Connecticut Superior Court Issues Troubling Ruling

November 13, 2025
Connecticut Superior Court Entertains Claim that a Trustee’s Resignation Constitutes a Fraudulent Conveyance

November 7, 2025
Probate Litigation Alert – Detrimental Impact of Delayed Action in a Connecticut Will Contest

September 11, 2025
Importance of Recordkeeping for Agents under a Power of Attorney

April 24, 2025
What Happens When an Executor Dies? Ensuring Smooth Estate Administration in Connecticut

April 22, 2025
Partners Michael Clear and Erin Nicholls Author Article for Reuters on Estate Planning for Founders

January 16, 2025
Form 706 vs. Form 1041: What is Deductible?

December 12, 2024
Private Client Services 2024 Year-End Advisory

October 17, 2024
Estate Planning Considerations for Non-U.S. Citizen Spouses

September 26, 2024
Family Office Basics: Structure, Benefits and Valuable Takeaways

September 5, 2024
A Guide to Estate Planning for Tangible Assets

August 22, 2024
Estate Planning and Divorce: Lessons from In re E. Earl Lyden Trust

August 15, 2024
Preserving Your Legacy: Estate Tax Deferral for Closely Held Businesses

2024
Estate Planning for College-Aged Children

July 11, 2024
U.S. Income Taxation of Foreign Trusts – Beware!

2024
LGBTQ+ Family Estate Planning

June 24, 2024
Connecticut’s New Trust Decanting Statute

June 2024
Connelly v. United States (No. 23-146)

June 7, 2024
Navigating Trust Taxation: State Income Tax

May 16, 2024
Common Income Tax Compliance for Estates

April 18, 2024
Directed Trusts in Connecticut

April 2024
SLATS — Spousal Lifetime Access Trusts

March 27, 2024
Nonjudicial Settlement Agreements in Connecticut

February 29, 2024
10 Reasons to Update Your Estate Plan

February 23, 2024
2024 Non-Citizen U.S. Transfer Tax Overview

Updated March 2025
Domicile and Residence: Key Factors to Consider for Estate Planning

January 2024
Client Alert: 2024 Estate, Gift and GST Exemptions

January 2024
Checklist for Changing Domicile

December 14, 2023
Private Client Services 2023 Year-End Advisory

December 2023
The Gift of Medical Care – the "Med" of the "Med-Ed Exclusion"

December 5, 2023
Client Alert: Increased Federal Estate, Gift, and Generation-Skipping Transfer Tax Exemptions in 2024

November 30, 2023
Probate Litigation Alert: Connecticut Supreme Court Affirms Validity of No Contest Clauses

October 11, 2023
Modern Love, Timeless Legacy: Estate Planning For All Couples

September 21, 2023
Strategies for Owning Property in Multiple States

September 14, 2023
Qualified Personal Residence Trusts

August 17, 2023
The Ultimate Guide to Planning for a Family Vacation Property

August 7, 2023
Loaning Money to Family: A Guide to Intrafamily Loans

July 27, 2023
3 Key Strategies for Funding Educational Expenses

July 19, 2023
Modification and Termination of Irrevocable Trusts

July 13, 2023
5 Key Annual Requirements for Private Foundations

July 5, 2023
Maximizing Estate Planning Strategies in Various Interest Rate Environments

June 29, 2023
Understanding Digital Assets in the Context of Estate Planning Part II

Summer 2023
Key Considerations in Estate Planning for LGBTQ+ Individuals and Couples

April 28, 2023
Understanding Digital Assets in the Context of Estate Planning

April 3, 2023
How Do I Have A “Foreign Trust” If I Don’t Live Overseas?

March 29, 2023
529 Plans and Divorce

2023
Enforcement of a No-Contest Clause

February 15, 2023
Fiduciary Duties in Estate Administration

February 1, 2023
Five Reasons Why You Should Do Your Estate Plan

December 21, 2022
The Estate Planning Family Meeting: 5 Steps to a Successful Meeting

December 12, 2022
Private Client Services 2022 Year-End Advisory

December 2, 2022
GRATs — Grantor Retained Annuity Trusts

2022
New Guidance on No Contest Clauses in Connecticut

2022
Prenuptial Agreements

July 26, 2022
The Anti-Clawback Regulation and its Limitations

2022
Community Property

2022
Private Client Services: Service Highlights

May 31, 2022
With Sophisticated Planning, Don’t Underestimate the Need for a Proper Valuation

May 23, 2022
Update on the Biden Administration’s Proposed Tax Changes

December 8, 2021
Private Client Services 2021 Year-End Advisory

September 17, 2021
Estate Tax Watch 2021: House Ways and Means Committee Proposal Lowers Estate Tax Exemption

August 26, 2021
Wealth Planning in 2021: Preparing For a Changing Tax Landscape

August 25, 2021
Dynasty Trusts

August 25, 2021
Gift Assets Now

August 25, 2021
Substitute Assets in Existing Grantor Trusts

October 6, 2020
SLATs—Spousal Lifetime Access Trusts

October 6, 2020
Dynasty Trusts

October 6, 2020
Estate Planning and the 2020 Election

August 17, 2020
Intrafamily Loans

June 11, 2020
The Private Client Services Department’s First Episode of “Insights on Estate Planning” is Published in The National Law Review
The National Law Review

May 27, 2020
Non-Residents Owning Real Estate in Connecticut – Possible Strategy for Minimizing Tax

May 19, 2020
Grantor Retained Annuity Trusts (GRATS)

January 6, 2020
PCS Client Alert: The SECURE Act

December 20, 2019
Private Client Services 2019 Year-End Advisory

July 15, 2019
Estate Planning Alert: Connecticut Legislature Passes Overhaul of Connecticut Trust Law

March 26, 2019
Estate Planning Alert: Connecticut to Match Federal Gift and Estate Tax Exemptions by 2023

March 26, 2019
Estate Planning Strategies in Various Interest Rate Environments

December 18, 2018
Private Client Services 2018 Year-End Advisory

November 13, 2018
Legal Issues for High-Growth Technology Companies
The National Law Review

October 23, 2018
Estate Planning for Founders
The National Law Review

September 27, 2018
Non-Tax Reasons for Estate Planning

December 22, 2017
President Trump Signs Tax Reform Legislation

December 12, 2017
Private Client Services 2017 Year-End Advisory

November 9, 2017
Strategies For Owning Property In Multiple States

November 1, 2017
Connecticut Estate Tax Exemption Increased

August 9, 2017
Trusts in Divorce: The Connecticut Supreme Court Speaks in Ferri

February 6, 2017
A 2017 Repeal of the “Death Tax?”

December 15, 2016

Private Client Services 2016 Year-End Advisory

August 17, 2016

New Proposed Regulations Concerning Valuation Discounts

July 27, 2016

Portability: A Useful Estate Planning Tool

December 22, 2015

2015 Year-End Estate Planning Advisory

July 15, 2015

Connecticut Budget Set to Impact the State's Highest Earners

February 26, 2015

Obama Administration's 2016 Budget Proposal

December 22, 2014

2014 Year-End Estate Planning Advisory

June 2, 2014

Significant Changes to New York Estate and Income Tax Law Effective April 1, 2014

February 3, 2014

Estate Planning For Your Digital Assets

December 6, 2013

2013 Year-End Estate Planning Advisory

April 30, 2013

Income Tax Provisions of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 and Other Recent Legislation

January 14, 2013

Estate Planning Ramifications of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012

December 30, 2009

Beneficiary Designations: A Supreme Decision

Connecticut Bar Association Estates and Probate Newsletter

August 24, 2006

Estate Tax Deferral if Estate Assets Consist Largely of Closely Held Business Interests: Internal Revenue Code §6166

Tax Newsletter of the Connecticut Bar Association, August 2, 2006