



**Trial Lawyers
Section**

5th Annual Trial Lawyers Awards

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

5th Annual Trial Lawyers Awards

Nominations are now open through the NYSBA Trial Lawyers Section for individuals who have made exceptional contributions to both the legal profession and the community. These awards recognize outstanding achievements across various facets of the legal and judicial fields, and nominations are welcome from the general public — membership in the Trial Lawyers Section is not required.

Recipients of the annual awards will be honored at the Awards and Networking Reception on January 15, 2026, during the Annual Meeting at the New York Hilton Midtown. Light refreshments will be served.

The Peter C. Kopff Trial Advocacy Award

This award, established by the Trial Lawyers Section, honors the distinguished career of private practice trial lawyers and judges in New York State who embody integrity and the highest ethical standards in their profession.

About Peter C. Kopff: Peter C. Kopff is a highly distinguished attorney and trial advocate who served as Chair of the NYSBA Trial Lawyers Section from 2012-2013 and received the Distinguished Trial Lawyer Award in 2017. Known for his unwavering ethics, he has extensively lectured, published on trial advocacy, mentored many lawyers, and demonstrated a commitment to diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

Award Qualifications

The nominee has:

- Practiced as a trial lawyer in private practice or a member of the Judiciary in New York State
- Demonstrated success in providing high-quality education, training, teaching, or mentoring
- Exhibited excellence in trial advocacy and/or judicial service, maintaining integrity and ethical standards
- Committed to fostering diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

The Justice Irma Vidal Santaella Memorial Award

The Trial Lawyers Section created this award to honor Justice Irma Vidal Santaella, the first Puerto Rican/Hispanic woman elected to the New York State Supreme Court and the first Puerto Rican woman lawyer in New York. A trailblazer in civil rights, she founded the Legion of Voters, Inc., helped draft amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and co-founded N.O.W. and other civil rights organizations.

The award recognizes litigators in New York State who demonstrate excellence in the courtroom, uphold the highest standards of advocacy and integrity, and actively promote diversity and inclusion within the legal profession. Recipients engage in professional development, mentoring, teaching, and community involvement, embodying Justice Santaella's lifelong dedication to justice and empowering marginalized communities.

Award Qualifications

The nominee has:

- Significant experience as a trial lawyer or judge in New York State or federal courts in downstate New York
- Demonstrated excellence in trial advocacy and/or judicial service, displaying integrity and ethical conduct
- Dedication to achieving excellence in trial practice and/or judicial service through professional engagement, community involvement, teaching, or mentoring
- Commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession

Betty D. Friedlander Award for Trial Excellence

The Trial Lawyers Section created this award to honor the pioneering career of Betty Friedlander, one of the first female trial lawyers in upstate New York. Betty spent 18 years in private practice, litigating personal injury, criminal defense, and matrimonial/custody cases, before serving two electoral terms as County Court/Family Court Judge. She also directed the Cornell Legal Aid Clinic, contributed to numerous NYSBA and OCA programs, and mentored countless young lawyers and law students.

After retiring from the bench at age 70, Betty practiced another 29 years as a trial lawyer, trying cases well into her 90s.

The award recognizes a trial lawyer in upstate New York (outside NYC) who has distinguished themselves in trial practice, demonstrated exceptional trial skill and professional conduct, and shown a commitment to excellence through professional engagement, advocacy, teaching, or mentoring.

Award Qualifications

The nominee has:

- Substantial practice as a trial lawyer in state or federal courts in upstate New York.
- Excellence in trial skills, including courtroom practice, case preparation, client and collegial relations, litigation strategy, and ethics.
- Commitment to professional excellence through writing, advocacy, teaching, mentoring, or other forms of engagement.



NOMINATION FORM

Candidate Name: _____

Title (if applicable): _____

Nominated for the following Award:

- ☐ Betty Friedlander Award for Trial Excellence
- ☐ The Peter C. Kopff Trial Advocacy Award
- ☐ The Justice Irma Vidal Santaella Memorial Award

(One selection per form. Note that you may nominate as many candidates as you would like in each category. Please use a separate form for each).

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Nominated by: _____

Title (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Candidate's Qualifications: Please provide details regarding the candidate's qualifications for this award, including:

- Number of years in practice
- Location and nature of practice
- Trial experience and significant distinguishing qualities
- Demonstrations of commitment to the cultivation of excellence in trial skills (e.g., professional affiliation, writing, teaching, mentoring, etc.)

Optional Supporting Information: Supporting documentation is encouraged, such as:

- A resume or similar biographical material for the nominee
- News articles
- Brief writings
- Letters of support

Please limit all nomination materials to 25 pages or less.

Nomination Deadline: November 21st, 2025

Prize Awarded: The recipient will receive an award of recognition and a complimentary registration to the 2025 Trial Lawyers Annual Meeting program on Thursday, January 15th, 2026.

Presentation Date: The award will be presented during the Trial Lawyers and Torts, Insurance, and Compensation Law Annual Meeting Awards Reception on January 15th, 2026, at the New York Hilton Midtown.

Questions can be directed to the Trial Lawyers Chair, Brett French (bfrench@thefrenchfirm.com).

Please email completed nomination form and supporting documentation by **November 21st, 2025** to the **Trial Lawyers Section Liaison, Gina Bartosiewicz (Gbartosiewicz@nysba.org)**.