

Seven Lippes Mathias Attorneys Appear on Palm Beach Illustrated's 2026 Top Lawyers List



September 14, 2026 | **PRESS RELEASES**

Lippes Mathias LLP is pleased to announce that seven of its West Palm Beach attorneys have been named to [Palm Beach Illustrated's 2026 Top Lawyers list](#).

[Michael R. Bakst](#) was recognized in bankruptcy and creditor debtor rights/insolvency and reorganization law. [Matthew L. Brust](#), [Cathleen D. Ward](#), and [Philip H. Ward, III](#), were recognized in business/corporate law. [Bari L. Goldstein](#) and [I. Jeffrey Pheterson](#) were recognized in labor and employment law. Michael J Posner was recognized in real estate law.

The list was compiled by Palm Beach Illustrated in partnership with Professional Research Services. Licensed Palm Beach County attorneys were asked to recommend peers in specific practice areas, excluding themselves, with nominations limited to three colleagues per category. Nominees were evaluated based on survey results, license status and standing with The Florida Bar, with inclusion determined by vote totals.

About Michael R. Bakst

Michael R. Bakst is a member of Lippes Mathias' financial reorganization, restructuring & insolvency practice team, where he represents creditors, bankruptcy trustees, and receivers, as well as litigants within complex bankruptcy matters, commercial litigation, receiverships, and assignments for the benefit of creditors.

Bakst currently serves as a panel United States Bankruptcy Trustee for the Southern District of Florida and previously served as an examiner appointed through the offices of the United States Trustee. He is a frequent speaker at continuing legal education programs for bankruptcy and commercial litigation practitioners, as well as for trustees in bankruptcy on a regional level.

About Matthew L. Brust

Matthew L. Brust concentrates his practice on mergers and acquisitions, private equity, partnerships, corporate governance, and general corporate matters. He advises private equity/independent sponsors and private companies on a wide range of transactional and governance matters, including acquisitions, dispositions, and structuring. He also routinely serves as outside general counsel to clients on day-to-day contract and commercial matters, transactions, governance, and operational issues.

During his career, Brust has advised on transactions in the lower to mid-market across a range of industries, including HVAC, roofing, landscaping, healthcare, software, waterproofing/foundation repair, manufacturing, and waste services.

Brust earned his Master of Laws (LL.M.) in taxation from the University of Florida Levin College of Law. Prior to joining Lippes Mathias, he practiced in the corporate and M&A group at an Am Law 50 law firm in West Palm Beach and previously worked as a business and tax attorney at a regional firm in Fort Myers, Florida.

About Bari L. Goldstein

Bari L. Goldstein is a member of Lippes Mathias' employment practice, focusing on preventative labor and employment defense work. She represents and counsels private, not-for-profit, and public sector employers of all sizes on regulatory, administrative, and litigation issues affecting the employment relationship. With more than 25 years of experience representing employers and managers on labor and employment matters, Goldstein advises on day-to-day personnel issues, wage and hour matters, internal investigations, reductions in force and layoffs, and employee relations; drafts, edits, and reviews employee handbooks and policies, severance and employment agreements, job descriptions, and various employment forms; drafts responses and appears at mediations, on-site audits, and investigations by governmental agencies — including the OFCCP, DOL, ICE, and EEOC — involving complaints of discrimination, I-9 compliance, unemployment claims, and wage and hour issues; and represents and advises federal contractors during OFCCP audits and counsels clients on affirmative action plan obligations and requirements.

Goldstein is certified as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) by the Human Resources Certification Institute and as a Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) by the Society for Human Resource Management. She is also a qualified EEO investigator.

About I. Jeffrey Pheterson

I. Jeffrey Pheterson concentrates his practice in employment law, business and corporate law, complex litigation, and probate litigation. He has represented clients before federal and state courts throughout Florida.

Pheterson holds a Martindale-Hubbell Rating of AV Preeminent, reflecting the highest levels of legal ability and ethical standards as determined by confidential opinions from members of the bar and judiciary.

About Michael J. Posner

Michael J. Posner has practiced real estate and business law in South Florida for 30 years. His practice covers residential and commercial closing transactions, lender, seller, and borrower representation in purchase, loan, and refinance transactions, complex title issues, and representation of condominium and homeowner associations.

Posner's community service includes positions on several municipal boards, including his current role as special magistrate for the Village of Wellington and the City of Parkland. He also serves as a United States Housing and Urban Development foreclosure commissioner and as an expert witness in complex real estate and title cases, including matters on behalf of the Florida Department of Transportation.

About Cathleen D. Ward

Cathleen D. Ward is a partner and co-office leader of the firm's West Palm Beach office. She represents financial institutions and business owners on commercial lending, real estate, contracts, and general corporate and business matters.

Ward's experience includes reviewing due diligence materials and drafting and negotiating documents for a variety of transactions, including asset purchases, stock purchases, construction loans, refinancing, working capital loans, equipment purchases, and real estate acquisitions. Her corporate work includes advising businesses on entity formation, corporate governance, licensing, sales, mergers, and acquisitions. She has served as corporate counsel across a range of industries, including the technology industry — where she has experience preparing privacy policies, user agreements, and development agreements for software applications — and the citrus industry, where she has prepared licensing and sublicensing agreements with local and international agencies, variety developers, propagators, and growers. As a closing attorney for commercial lenders, Ward prepares and reviews loan files for conventional commercial loans as well as SBA 7(a) and 504 loans.

About Philip H. Ward III

Philip H. Ward III focuses his practice on complex business transactions, contracts, commercial real estate, commercial lending, and other business matters. He also has experience in intellectual property transactions, including development contracts and licensing transactions in the United States and internationally. His licensing work has included hydrogen PEM fuel cells, streaming and other software licenses, and new varieties of plants in the Florida citrus industry.

Ward serves on the board of directors of the Economic Council, as an advisory board member of FAU Tech Runway, as vice chairman and trustee of BIZPAC, and as a member of the Business Development Board. He previously served as chairman of the Business Development Board, chairman of the Palm Beach County Health Care District, and chairman of the Palm Beach County Infrastructure Surtax Independent Citizen Oversight Committee, and as a

trustee of Palm Beach State College. He was appointed to the Health Care District and Palm Beach State College by former Gov. Rick Scott.

Prior to joining Lippes Mathias, Ward served as managing partner of Ward Damon P.L., which he founded in 1987.

About Lippes Mathias LLP

Lippes Mathias is a full-service law firm ranked among the top 200 law firms in the U.S. by size, with nearly 230 attorneys serving clients regionally, nationally, and internationally. With offices in Buffalo, Clarence, Albany, Long Island, New York, Rochester, Syracuse, and Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Greater Toronto Area; Chicago, Ill.; Jacksonville, Tampa Bay, and West Palm Beach, Fla.; Cleveland, Ohio; San Antonio, Texas; Oklahoma City, Okla. and Washington, D.C., the firm represents publicly and privately-owned companies, private equity and venture capital firms, independent sponsors, real estate developers, financial institutions, municipalities, governmental entities, and individuals.

Year after year, Lippes Mathias is proud to be recognized by The Best Lawyers in America®, U.S. News - Best Lawyers®, Super Lawyers, and Chambers USA. For more information, visit www.lippes.com.

Related Team



Michael R. Bakst
Partner



Matthew L. Brust
Associate



Bari L. Goldstein
Partner



I. Jeffrey Pheterson
Senior Counsel



Michael J. Posner
Partner | Florida
Board Certified In
Real Estate Law



Cathleen D. Ward
Partner | Office Co-
Leader, West Palm
Beach



Philip H. Ward, III
Partner

New York: Albany, Buffalo, Clarence, Long Island, New York City, Rochester, Saratoga Springs, Syracuse // Florida: Jacksonville, Tampa Bay, West Palm Beach
Illinois: Chicago // Ohio: Cleveland // Oklahoma: Oklahoma City // Ontario: Greater Toronto Area // Texas: San Antonio // Washington, D.C.

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