

# Stephen Ross Johnson

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## Information

- Federal and State Criminal Defense, Trials and Appeals
- Corporate and Health Care Investigations and Defense
- Board of Directors, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- President, Hamilton Burnett American Inn of Court
- President, Tennessee Innocence Project
- Past President, Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Past Chair, Tennessee Bar Association Criminal Justice Section

Stephen Ross Johnson has defended criminal cases in state and federal courts throughout the United States, ranging from complex white-collar financial crimes to death penalty cases. He is a partner with Ritchie, Dillard, Davies and Johnson, PC, in Knoxville, Tennessee, and is a criminal defense trial and appellate attorney.

Mr. Johnson is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States; the Supreme Court of Tennessee and all Tennessee appellate and trial courts; the United States Courts of Appeals for the Fourth, Sixth, and Seventh Circuits; the United States District Courts for the Eastern, Middle, and Western Districts of Tennessee; the United States District Court for the Northern District of Florida; the United States District Court for the

Southern District of Illinois; and the United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. In addition, he has been admitted to practice on a *pro hac vice* basis in many other federal and state courts.

Mr. Johnson has been defense counsel in jury trials and hearings in state and federal courts involving a wide variety of criminal offenses, including charges of theft of trade secrets, racketeering, money laundering, health care fraud, illegal gambling, government contract fraud, wire and mail fraud, tax fraud, bank fraud, perjury and false statements, arson, firearms offenses, illegal drug distribution, assault, child abuse and neglect, internet crimes, rape and other sexual offenses, and homicide. He has successfully defended persons at jury trial in murder prosecutions when the death penalty was sought. He has successfully litigated cases involving social media communications and other electronic evidence, and he has successfully defended cases involving mental health issues, such as legal insanity, diminished capacity, and competency. In addition, he often represents health care providers and other licensed professionals in disciplinary matters.

In his appellate practice, Mr. Johnson has represented persons wrongfully convicted of serious felony matters on appeal and collateral review, to include direct appeal, state post-conviction, and federal habeas corpus proceedings, and has obtained reversals of wrongful convictions and sentences.

Mr. Johnson has served multiple terms on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL) and is a past President of the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (TACDL). For three consecutive years he served as chair of the Tennessee Bar Association (TBA) Criminal Justice Section and as the Associate General Counsel for the TBA. Mr. Johnson is on faculty with the Tennessee Criminal Defense College (TCDC), co-chairs NACDL's Sixth Circuit amicus

and membership committees, and actively serves on the white-collar defense, sentencing, and investment committees of NACDL. He has served on the board of the Knoxville Bar Association and is co-chair of the law office technology and management committee. He is the President and an emeritus Master of the Bench with the Hamilton Burnett Chapter of the American Inns of Court. He is a fellow of the American, Tennessee, and Knoxville Bar Foundations. For his volunteer efforts, the TBA honored Mr. Johnson with its Access to Justice Award. For many years he has been listed in Best Lawyers in America in white-collar criminal defense and has achieved an AV rating for preeminent legal ability and ethical standards from Martindale-Hubbell.

In addition to his private practice, Mr. Johnson is the incorporator of the Tennessee Innocence Project and serves as the President of the Board of Directors. He has been involved in the innocence movement in Tennessee for nearly two decades. In 2000, he helped start and lead an earlier form of the Tennessee Innocence Project that later became the Innocence Clinic at the University of Tennessee College of Law, where he served as an adjunct professor and director from 2009-2018. Mr. Johnson assisted in the effort that led to the passage of the Tennessee Post-Conviction DNA Analysis Act of 2001, and he has successfully litigated innocence cases that not only reversed wrongful convictions but helped establish the procedures in Tennessee for bringing newly discovered evidence claims.

Mr. Johnson has published articles and taught lawyers, law students, members of law enforcement, and others across the country on criminal law and litigation issues. He is a graduate of the National Criminal Defense College (NCDC) and received his Doctor of Jurisprudence, with honors, from the University of Tennessee College of Law. Mr. Johnson completed his undergraduate education at Carson-Newman University, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in International Economics with a minor in Political Science. He attended graduate school at the University of Glasgow,

Scotland, where he was a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, graduated with a Diploma in Contemporary Economic History and worked as an economist for Govan Initiative, a Scottish economic development agency. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Mr. Johnson also worked in education, banking, retail, farming, and manufacturing, and even as a juvenile probation officer and private investigator. He regularly draws on his diverse academic and vocational experiences in representing his clients.