

The Biz Court Digest: Welcome To Miami

By **Brian Miller, Samantha Kavanaugh and Ross Linzer** (December 10, 2025, 4:41 PM EST)

While Delaware's Court of Chancery tends to get all the headlines, the rest of the U.S. boasts a robust collection of localized business courts, where corporate disputes are regularly decided. This Law360 Expert Analysis series surveys business courts around the country, focusing on what makes them unique.

The Complex Business Litigation Division of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court in Miami-Dade County, staffed with only two judges, is responsible for hearing some of the most important and complicated business disputes in Florida.

The Miami CBL Division now has nearly 20 years of experience overseeing these cases. As one of the first business courts in Florida, founded in 2006, the Miami CBL Division is a pioneer upon which other jurisdictions — and recent amendments to Florida's Rules of Civil Procedure — have been modeled.

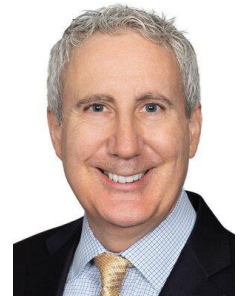
Almost 3 million people reside in Miami-Dade County, which comprises the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. Miami has seen a significant influx of residents and businesses over the years, particularly since 2020.

As a result, the civil circuit court in Miami is one of the busiest in the country. Based on the latest statistics available, the court saw almost 12,000 civil cases filed in the first six months of 2024 alone.[1] Of these, thousands were breach of contract and other business disputes.

Overseen by two judges with commercial litigation backgrounds, the Miami CBL Division has its own unique rules and procedures for case management. The court hears all cases with over \$750,000 in controversy in the areas of breach of contract, construction defect, business torts, shareholder disputes and trade secrets litigation.

Other cases are eligible for discretionary assignment to the Miami CBL Division as well. To obtain a discretionary transfer, parties need to file a motion for transfer to the Miami CBL Division, which will be decided by the administrative judge for the court.[2]

Unlike in the standard civil division, the Miami CBL Division offers federal court-style briefing



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requirements and deadlines for cases under its jurisdiction.[3] The Miami CBL Division also pioneered initial case management conferences and scheduling orders that were rare in other Florida state courts, but have now been adopted more widely through amendments to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure that became effective on Jan. 1 of this year.

Despite these recent amendments to Florida's Rules of Civil Procedure, the Miami CBL Division still continues to offer many advantages to litigants, including more certainty in procedures, quick rulings and experienced judges who are accustomed to hearing business disputes.

The two judges currently sitting in the Miami CBL Division are Judges Lisa Walsh and Thomas Rebull. Judge Walsh has overseen approximately 200 jury trials and was rated the most exceptional judge in the Miami-Dade Bar's 2024 judicial poll.[4]

Judge Rebull was an appellate law clerk, practiced in commercial litigation at several firms in Miami and was a general counsel for a private company. Both judges were selected to this position due to their proven track records in managing cases, as well as their backgrounds in civil commercial litigation.

The Miami CBL Division judges have handled many prominent cases over the years, including the extensive litigation following the tragic 2021 collapse of the Champlain Towers apartment building in Surfside, Florida. Former Miami CBL Division Judge Michael Hanzman presided over *In re: Champlain Towers South Collapse Litigation*, guiding the case to \$1.1 billion in recoveries in just over a year from start to finish.[5]

In 2024, Judge Rebull presided over *Klugh v. City of Miami*, a class action seeking to invalidate a 15% Miami parking surcharge as unconstitutional.[6] He also decided *Central Carillon Beach Condo Association v. Z Capital Florida Resort LLC*, a long-standing litigation regarding the Carillon Hotel development.[7] Judge Walsh is currently presiding over *The Collection LLC v. Porsche Latin America Inc.*, a \$300 million dispute involving a local car dealership,[8] and in May, in *United Mexican States v. Garcia Luna*, awarded \$2.5 billion to the Mexican government in litigation against its former security chief.[9]

The Miami CBL Division regularly hears shareholder derivative litigation, real estate partnership disputes, private investment fund breach of fiduciary duty claims, lender liability claims, complex construction litigation involving condominium associations and developers, and all manner of breach of contract claims.

Appeals from the Miami CBL Division are taken to the Third District Court of Appeal, one of six districts in the state. Florida has a three-tiered court system, with the Florida Supreme Court sitting as the court of final jurisdiction.

Unlike the Delaware Court of Chancery, Florida courts are unified law and equity courts. Therefore, the Miami CBL Division judges preside over jury trials, in addition to hearing motions and conducting mandatory case management conferences and bench trials.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the Miami CBL Division and the Court of Chancery is the relative lack of resources available to the judges in Miami. According to Ballotpedia.org, on a statewide basis, Florida spends only four times as much as Delaware for their respective state judicial systems, despite having 18 times more residents.[10]

The Miami CBL Division judges have no dedicated law clerks, and their paid staff consists only of a judicial assistant and a bailiff. The entire bench of 24 civil division judges shares only one civil general magistrate. Parties needing to transcribe hearings or trials must provide their own private court reporters.

But the Miami CBL Division judges have pioneered many innovations to keep their cases running more efficiently. Judge Gill Freeman, the first judge appointed to this specialized court 20 years ago, noted in the Florida Bar Journal that, at the time, some of the cases transferred to her had been languishing on the general civil docket for 15 years.[11]

For years, before Florida adopted mandatory case management conferences earlier this year, the Miami CBL Division judges required them in every case, including regular status conferences. The Miami CBL Division also requires premotion meet-and-confer conferences, which only went statewide as a requirement as of January of this year.

The Miami CBL Division judges regularly require clients to attend the initial case management conference, in addition to the lawyers, so that the clients can better understand what is required to move cases along. Most hearings are conducted via Zoom in order to ease the burden and expense on litigants.

There are exceptions, as Judge Rebull requires discovery hearings to be conducted in person, while Judge Walsh requires evidentiary hearings and any hearings over 30 minutes to be conducted in person. The Miami CBL Division judges will also sometimes require the submission of competing proposed orders in advance of hearings in order to speed up rulings.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the Miami CBL Division and traditional Florida civil litigation is that the judges in the Miami CBL Division try to be extremely proactive in ruling on issues. Unlike in most civil courtrooms in Florida state court, the Miami CBL Division judges require briefing on all motions under a schedule similar to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The Miami CBL Division judges will issue decisions on the papers, unlike the procedures applicable to most other Florida state court judges, who, unless relief is agreed to by the parties, act only after hearings are conducted.

Other jurisdictions in Florida have adopted complex business divisions, including Orlando, Tampa and Fort Lauderdale. But the Miami CBL Division is among the first pioneers in our state, and has heard many more complex business disputes than any other court in Florida.

The court's first nearly two decades have been a resounding success, and the court should continue to hear many important and interesting business disputes for years to come.

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[1] <https://trialstats.flcourts.org/>.

[2] The most recent administrative order setting forth which cases are heard by the Miami CBL Division

can be found on the court's website: <https://www.jud11.flcourts.org/docs/1-25-01%20RE-ESTABLISHMENT%20OF%20THE%20PROCEDURES%20FOR%20CBL%20-%20CIRCUIT%20CIVIL%20COURT%20-%20SAYFIE-conformed.pdf>.

[3] The Miami CBL Division rules also can be found on the court's website: <https://www.jud11.flcourts.org/docs/cblrulesrevised1219pm.pdf>.

[4] <https://www.miamidadebar.org/whos-the-best-south-florida-judge-lawyers-speak-out/>; full poll results can be found at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ahB82iCiOlzXuLP1x37n6Q0nJpVczzz7/view>.

[5] <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article273132375.html>.

[6] Klugh v. City of Miami, Case No. 2022-020524-CA-01 (Fla. 11th Jud. Cir.).

[7] Central Carillon Beach Condo. Ass'n v. Z Capital Florida Resort LLC, Case No. 2016-011172-CA-01 (Fla. 11th Jud. Cir.).

[8] The Collection LLC v. Porsche Latin America, Inc., Case No. 2022-018640-CA-01 (Fla. 11th Jud. Cir.).

[9] United Mexican States v. Garcia Luna, Case No. 2021-021562-CA-01 (Fla. 11th Jud. Cir.).

[10] https://ballotpedia.org/State_court_budgets_and_judicial_salaries.

[11] <https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/taking-a-hard-look-at-business-courts/>.