

PARTNER

Billy J. Williams

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📍 Bend



Billy J. Williams, former U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon, serves as a partner in Best Best & Krieger LLP's Environmental & Natural Resources practice group. During his 20-year tenure with the Department of Justice (DOJ), Billy became widely known as a consistent, balanced and effective consensus builder and community leader who continually strived to provide unbiased and apolitical justice to build community partnerships. Billy has engaged with various interests groups including federal, state and local government agencies, tribal leadership and diverse community members and stakeholders with varying perspectives on a range of issues and has successfully addressed conflicts resulting in continued growth and development for all parties involved.

Now in private practice, Billy provides counsel to clients addressing issues related to on environmental, litigation, public and private investigations, and tribal law issues and interests. He has experience in land management, civil disputes, crisis management, tribal matters, corporate and government investigations, public agency effectiveness and cannabis regulation. As U.S. Attorney in Oregon from 2015-2021, Billy worked to forge relationships, foster understanding, and represent victim and state interests. He served on numerous advisory subcommittees and working groups, including the Native American Issues Subcommittee, Civil Rights Subcommittee, Border and Immigration Subcommittee, Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee, Ninth Circuit Fairness Committee and as chair of the Attorney General's Marijuana Working Group.

Before serving as U.S. Attorney, Billy held additional leadership roles with the DOJ, as First Assistant U.S. Attorney, Chief of the Criminal Division, Chief of the Violent Crimes Unit, and as the district's Indian Country Assistant U.S. Attorney and Tribal liaison.

Before launching his career in federal service, Billy served as a Senior Deputy District Attorney in the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office in Portland, Oregon. During his decade-long tenure, he specialized in prosecuting violent crimes, including all forms of homicide, sex trafficking, drug trafficking, and sexual violence to children and adults.

Billy and his wife, Teena Fife, enjoy spending time hiking, biking, skiing, golfing and international travel. Billy enjoys a long history of community engagement and building bridges of understanding between diverse communities, law enforcement, state and federal land management agencies and business leaders.

CORE PRACTICES

Environmental Law & Natural Resources

Government Affairs

Native American Law

Special Districts

Investigations

Police & Public Safety

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

Willamette University College of Law, J.D.

Washington State University, B.A., criminal justice

Bar Admissions

Oregon

Notable Experience

- Following the 2016, Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupation, Billy facilitated meaningful engagement between federal agencies, state and county elected officials, and the general public on difficult and contentious issues related to land management of public lands.
- In 2020, Billy oversaw the efforts to ensure de-escalation of conflict over water resources, identification of common ground, consensus and implementation of successful initiatives for continued management of the Klamath Basin. This involved managing the interest of various parties from irrigators, county leaders, state and federal regulators, tribal leadership, private business, law enforcement and Bureau of Reclamation leadership.
- Served as former chairman of the Attorney General's Marijuana Working Group managing the issues related to cannabis production and sales, cannabis, the ever-shifting state legalization landscape, and the diversity of regulatory and enforcement. During his tenure, two marijuana summits were held in 2018 and 2019 addressing the potential federal legalization, decriminalization, cannabis industry interests, banking issues, federal/state regulatory enforcement, product safety, health and public safety issues, impacts on the private parcel industry, environmental consequences and a surging black market.

Accolades

- National Economic Security Alliance, William H Webster Profiles in Leadership Award, Prosecutorial Community Category, 2022
- United States Attorneys' Office, Distinguished Service Award, 2021
- Oregon District Attorney's Association, Appreciation Award, 2021
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Appreciation Award, 2021
- Oregon-Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program Executive Board, Appreciation Award, 2021
- Friends of the Muslim Educational Trust Award, 2019
- Citizen's Crime Commission Northwest, Hero Award, 2016
- Douglas County Oregon Appreciation Award for Service in Response to the Umpqua Community College Mass Shooting, 2015
- Department of Justice, Director's Award for Superior Performance in Indian Country/District of Oregon, 2014
- Department of Justice Special Commendation for Outstanding Service in the Civil Rights Division, 2014
- U.S. Attorney of Oregon for Contributions to Indian Country in Oregon, 2001

Professional & Community Involvement

- High Desert Museum, Board of Trustees, Member
- Northwest Regional Re-entry Center, Board of Directors, Member
- Foundation for Drug Policy Solutions Leadership Council, Member
- National Association of Former United States Attorneys
- Urban League of Portland, Board Member, 2010-2015

Thought Leadership

Publications

- “Lawyers: So-Called Progressive Prosecutors Have Failed in Their Responsibility to Follow the Law,” Chicago Tribune, Aug. 13, 2023

Presentations

- “The Americans with Disabilities Act & Law Enforcement: Accommodating Individuals in a Mental Health Crisis,” National Sheriff’s Association Annual Conference, June 25, 2025
- “Talking With the Feds: Best Practices for Engaging With Members of a U.S. Attorney’s Office,” International Municipal Lawyers Association’s Annual Conference, WONK Breakfast, Oct. 21, 2022
- “Deep Dive into Oregon Psilocybin Services Act: Federal Law Issues,” Emerge Law Group Webinar, May 26, 2022