



## Mediation Panel List Mediator Spotlight May 2024

Under Section 3.2 of the Court's Mandatory Mediation Plan, the parties are generally able to select their own mediator from the Court-approved Mediation Panel List (unless the Court has ordered otherwise, or the parties cannot agree upon a mediator).

To help inform the parties of the unique backgrounds, experiences, training, and qualifications of the over 100 mediators on the Court-approved Mediation Panel List, each month the Court will select and highlight two mediators at random to feature in this publication.

**Michael D. Hart**

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**Hourly Mediation/Preparation Rates:** Generally, rates are \$275 per hour which includes preparation and travel outside of St. Clair and Madison Counties, Illinois, St. Louis City and St. Louis and St. Charles Counties, Missouri. Rates are negotiable for small or special matters.

**Nature of Practice:** Mike has had a variety of experience in the practice of law, from working at firm of two to a large corporate firm. His practice emphasis has been in litigation and trial work, representing both plaintiffs and defendants, and individuals and corporations. Mike has handled cases involving, and gone to trial on, contracts, UCC, product liability, accountant malpractice, construction, banking, transportation, securities laws, civil rights (42 USC 1983 suits), employment discrimination, and personal injury. He has also represented municipalities and police officers in various matters and litigation. Mike also has represented and has transactional experience for small businesses.

**Background:** Mike was born and raised in St. Louis City. He currently lives in University City with his wife. He has two sons and three grandsons. Mike attended Navy OCS in Newport, R.I. in 1972-1973 and was on active duty with the Navy through August of 1976.

**Education:** Mike attended Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio 1969-1971 (on the freshman football team) and the University of Missouri- Saint Louis 1971-1973, graduating with a BA in Economics (cum laude). He attended University of Missouri – Kansas City Law School August 1976 – December 1978, graduating cum laude and as a member of the Law

Review. Mike is a member of the Illinois and Missouri bars and is admitted in his local federal and appellate courts.

**Work History:** Mike first started work as an attorney with a solo practitioner in Independence, Missouri, where he clerked during law school. He then moved back to St. Louis in 1980 where he worked at Peper Martin Jensen Maichel and Hetlage, which merged with Blackwell Sanders in 1998. Mike's practice was litigation and trial work, handling many contract, UCC, product liability, accountant malpractice, construction, banking, transportation, and securities law cases. In 2001, he moved to the *then* firm of Devereux Murphy LLC, and later Sher Corwin LLC, continuing work in litigation and additionally handling 42 USC 1983 suits, employment discrimination and personal injury, for both plaintiff and defendants. In 2019, Mike became of counsel to Copeland Thompson Jeep in Clayton, Missouri.

Mike received mediator training at the University of Missouri – Columbia in 2000, and since then has had many CLEs in mediation training. Mike has mediated various matters, including civil rights, construction, personal injury, contract, and employment discrimination.

**Professional achievements:** Mike has been previously named a Super Lawyer (General Practice) and is currently selected as a Best Lawyer (Commercial litigation). Mike was appointed as a special representative by the Missouri Supreme Court to the Region XI Disciplinary Committee, and later as a member. This committee first hears matters on attorney disciplinary complaints.

**Outside The Office:** Mike served on active duty in the US Navy from 1972 (OCS)/1973 until August 1976. He received his commission through OCS at Newport, Rhode Island, and was an unrestricted line officer. His duty stations included service on the USS Agerholm (DD 826). Mike remained in the Naval Reserve after active duty, retiring as a Commander in 1996.

Mike was a basketball coach and basketball/gym director at Our Lady of Lourdes in University City from 1990 to 2005. He also assisted at Chaminade High School in summer basketball, Christmas Tree Farm, and CBC High School in various parent activities including First Nighters (theatre club).

Mike is on the Board for the Sisters of Saint Peter Claver convent in St. Louis County and previously was on the board of Friends of Steinberg Skating Rink in the 1990s.

**Dennis J. Graber**

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**Hourly Mediation/Preparation Rates:** \$300 per hour, which includes preparation and travel. No minimum.

**Nature of Practice:** Mr. Graber practices in the areas of product liability, toxic tort, and environmental matters, with an emphasis on asbestos litigation in Illinois and Missouri. His representation also includes other product liability, and toxic tort matters where claims were made regarding chemicals, coatings, and appliances. He has completed over 40 hours of mediation training.

**Background:** Mr. Graber was born in Manhattan, KS. He then lived with his family in India. Following their return to the United States, he lived in Kansas and Oklahoma before his family moved to Illinois in 1972. He has resided in the Belleville, IL area since 1987. He and his wife have four children and six grandchildren.

**Education:** Mr. Graber graduated from Illinois College in Jacksonville, IL in 1981. He graduated from Southern Illinois University School of Law in 1984.

**Work History:** Mr. Graber began the practice of law with the Firm of Campbell, Furnall, Moore & Jacobsen in Mt. Vernon, IL. Since 1987, he has been with Hinshaw & Culbertson in Belleville, IL. He is

admitted to practice in the States of Illinois and Missouri. He is also admitted to practice before the United States District Courts for the Southern District of Illinois and the Central District of Illinois, and before the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. During his practice, he has represented clients in cases arising out of automobile accidents; premises liability; products liability; legal, architect and engineer malpractice; construction accidents; bad faith insurance; insurance coverage; and employment.

**Outside the Office:** Mr. Graber's interests include biking, hiking, traveling, and spending time with his family.