



Kara E.F. Cengar

Partner | Group Leader, Intellectual Property & Technology

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Chicago - 312.658.6618

Kara represents sophisticated clients in high-stakes, complex intellectual property litigation. As an accomplished trial lawyer, she leads litigation teams and advocates for domestic and international companies of all sizes, as well as individuals, in disputes nationwide. She formulates litigation strategies for pre-trial litigation, discovery, pre-trial motions, and witness and trial strategies for both jury and bench trials.

With over 35 years as a trial lawyer, Kara has focused entirely on IP cases for creators, designers, inventors, manufacturers, and others in the digital, computer software, and technology-based industries. Her courtroom experience includes jury and bench trials, preliminary injunction hearings, hearings on emergency temporary restraining orders, seizure and impoundment orders, and Section 337 claims before the International Trade Commission (ITC).

Education

- Loyola University Chicago School of Law (J.D., 1988)
- Loyola University Chicago (B.A., 1985)

Bar Admissions

- Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois (Trial Bar)
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Michigan
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Federal Claims

Professional Affiliations

- Chicago Bar Association

Practices & Industries

- Intellectual Property & Technology
- Restrictive Covenants
- Manufacturing
- Anti-Counterfeiting and Grey Market Goods
- Brand Development, Management & Enforcement
- Copyright Management, Licensing, and Enforcement
- Intellectual Property Litigation
- Software & Information Technology
- Trademark Prosecution, Licensing, & Enforcement
- Trade Secret Protection & Enforcement
- Patent Prosecution, Licensing, and Enforcement
- Litigation & Dispute Resolution

- Illinois State Bar Association
- Intellectual Property Institute (*Founding Charter Member, 2013-present*)
- Chicago Women in Intellectual Property (ChiWIP) (*Founding Member, 2015-present*)
- Litigation Counsel of America (*Senior Fellow, 2007-present*)
- American Bar Foundation (*Fellow, 2019-present*)
- Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce (*Board of Directors, 2005-2006*)
- National Association of Women Business Owners (*National Board of Directors, June 2009-May 2011*)
- National Association of Women Business Owners (*Chicago Chapter President, 2005-2006; President-Elect, 2004-2005; Advisory Board, 2003-2007; Board of Directors, 2003-2007; Special Advisor to the President, 2007-2008*)

Community Involvement

- Loyola University School of Law Alumni Board of Governors (*Member, 2025-Present*)
- Boardroom Bound (*Charter Lifetime Friend, 2005-2010*)

Firm Involvement

- Group Leader, Intellectual Property & Technology

Awards & Honors

- *Crain's Chicago Business* Notable Litigators & Trial Attorneys (2025)
- Named to *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Trademark Law (2021-2026); Litigation - Intellectual Property (2022-2026)
- Named to the Illinois Super Lawyers list, Intellectual Property Litigation (2005-2007; 2009-2010; 2013-2026)
- Recognized by Super Lawyers as one of the Top 50 Female Lawyers in Illinois (2024; 2026)
- Leading Creative Arts Lawyers by Leader Lawyers for Chicago (2023)
- Leading Women Lawyers by Leading Lawyers (2023)
- Leading Chicago Metro Women Lawyers by Leading Lawyers (2023)
- Illinois Leading Lawyers (2020-2025)
- Salute! Women in Law Award, Chicago Lawyer and Chicago Daily Law Bulletin (2020)
- Top Suburban Business Lawyers (2020)
- Crain's Notable Women in Law (2020)
- Chicago High Achievers, Advancement Award for Advancement of Diversity (2009)
- Small Business Administration, Illinois Office, Champion of the Year for Women in Business (2006)
- Small Business Administration, Regional, Champion of the Year for Women in Business (2006)

Experience

Copyright and Digital Millennium Copyright Act

- Obtained a \$16.1 million jury verdict and \$20.7 million judgment for a case involving copyright for artwork and graphics for video reel casino slot machine games in the social, mobile, online and home computer gaming industries.
- Obtained a \$1.7 million statutory damages award under the DMCA after a jury found 696 DMCA violations for providing and distributing false copyright management information and for the removal of copyright management information.
- Represented a client in litigation involving copyright and other IP rights for video reel casino slot machine games for land-based casino slot machine games and slot machine games in the social, mobile, and online industries.
- Represented a client in litigation involving claims for the taking, distribution, and misuse of CAD drawings and other digital and technical engineering-based drawings, as well as the removal and replacement of Copyright Management Information from such drawings in an international manufacturing and collaborative relationship context.
- Successfully defeated an ex parte application for a temporary restraining order and later request for preliminary injunction in a highly publicized alleged music copyright infringement and sampling case pending in the Central District of California.
- Obtained summary judgment findings of no infringement based upon a finding of no substantial similarity as a matter of law in a music copyright composition claim pending in the Central District of California.
- Obtained the dismissal of a music copyright case based upon despoliation of evidence.
- Defeated a request for preliminary injunction and then obtained a summary judgment finding of no substantial similarity in a highly publicized alleged music copyright infringement case filed first in the Northern District of Illinois and later in the Central District of California.
- Obtained an award of about \$2.5 million in attorneys' fees against a plaintiff that brought a copyright claim shown to be without basis and in which the plaintiff was found to have destroyed evidence.
- Obtained dismissal of a lawsuit and settlement of a claim of copyright infringement against a book author and publisher in the District of Georgia.

Patent and Complex Trade Secret

- Successfully enforced trade secret rights on behalf of a manufacturing supplier to the automotive industry and hybrid automotive industry, resulting in a \$32 million payment in settlement and a dismissal with prejudice of all claims against the client.
- Successfully defended a patent infringement case involving medical simulation devices, four patents, and multiple international defendants, including obtaining a transfer out of the Eastern District of Texas.
- Obtained a \$17+ million jury verdict and permanent injunction, plus an ongoing royalty payment during a transition period in patent infringement litigation involving four touch-screen user-interface patents for hemodialysis machines and related disposable products in the Northern District of California.

- Obtained a judgment of non-infringement (affirmed by Federal Circuit) in patent infringement bench trial litigation in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania involving methods of making inserts and transducer activated tools for ultrasonically activated tooth-cleaning tools.
- Defended retailers against industry-wide assertion of claims of patent infringement involving gift card technology in the Northern District of Illinois.
- Defended allegations of patent infringement of internet cookie technology and internet standards, including the impact of such royalty-free arrangements on a reasonable royalty analysis.
- Successfully defended litigation brought by non-practicing entities.

Trademark

- Enforced a brand owned by a small business against a large international upcoming brand. The case included complex issues of common law, federal and state trademark ownership rights and their geographic scope, progressive encroachment, licensee estoppel defense, disgorgement of profits in reverse confusion cases, willfulness, invalidity of federal registrations, including issues of registrations being found void ab initio, and issues relating to fraud on the trademark office post-In re Bose.
- Successfully defended a request for entry of an emergency temporary restraining order involving claims of alleged counterfeiting against a retailer.
- Obtained a product design change and change of trade show materials related to an ultrasonic dental scaler instrument after filing an emergency motion for a temporary restraining order before the District Court in the Northern District of Illinois.
- Obtained a permanent injunction and consent judgment enjoining false advertising, trademark infringement, product misbranding, and false patent marking for clothing in the District Court in the Northern District of Illinois.
- Represented a client in mediation before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in a stolen furniture design case.
- Obtained a permanent injunction and consent judgments of trademark infringement in complex multi-defendant federal, state, and common law trademark infringement action before the District of New Jersey.

Counseling

- Negotiated numerous settlements and resolutions of patent, trademark, copyright, DMCA, trade secret, and litigation matters pending in federal and state courts nationwide.
- Developed and implemented strategies to avoid litigation and to enforce intellectual property without litigation.

Copyright and Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)

A formidable advocate for her creative clients, Kara's copyright infringement work includes source code, software, visual displays, Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and digital technical and engineering drawings, and casino slot games (artwork and graphics, game

features, math, and software). She successfully defended high-profile multimillion-dollar copyright matters involving global hit musical works (composition, compilation, and sampling claims) and digital music claims for Grammy Award-winning artists, leading to defense summary judgments. She has also handled matters involving infringement of literary works (books and educational materials) and sculptural arts claims against internationally known plush toy manufacturers.

In 2019, Kara successfully led a multimillion-dollar copyright infringement jury trial to verdict for her client and obtained a \$20.7 million judgment involving some of the gaming industry's top casino slot games (artwork and graphics for video reel casino slot machine games), including social, mobile, online and CD/DVD casino game distribution (Sprite Sheets and .SWF files). It was the sixth-largest jury verdict in the State of Illinois in 2019.

In 2019, Kara successfully led a jury trial to verdict and thereafter obtained a \$1.7 million judgment for statutory damages. The case involved 696 violations for 1202(a) claims of providing and distributing false Copyright Management Information (CMI), 1202(b)(1) claims involving removal and alteration of Copyright Management Information (CMI), 1202(b)(2) claims involving distributing CMI when CMI has been removed, and 1202(b)(3) claims involving distributing and performing works and copies of works when CMI has been removed. Kara has also led litigation DMCA matters involving CAD and digital technical and engineering drawings.

Trade Secrets

Understanding that the protection of trade secrets is a vital intellectual property tool for every company, Kara has been involved in complex trade secret cases for her clients, including:

- Trade secret source code and computer programs, compilation, and combination source code trade secrets for the software development, manufacturing, and distribution industries.
- Trade secret technology for stators and manufacturing processes for stators in the hybrid automotive industry.
- Trade secret chemical formulas for flavors and fragrances for the food industry.
- Trade secret chemical formulas for defoamers for the paint industry.
- Trade secret customer lists for the tool industry.
- Trade secret pricing and customer information for the propane industry.

Patent Infringement & Design Patent Infringement

Kara has handled several significant and complex jury and bench trials, ITC proceedings, and litigation involving patents covering medical and surgical devices, medical simulation devices, dental tools and instruments, Internet, computer and software technology, telecommunications, cellphone technology, gift and debit card technology, automotive parts and replacement parts, and electronic and mechanical devices.

By way of example, she:

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Successfully defended a patent infringement case involving medical simulation devices, four patents, and multiple international defendants, including obtaining a transfer out of the Eastern District of Texas.

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Obtained a judgment of non-infringement (affirmed by Federal Circuit) in patent infringement bench trial litigation in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania involving methods of making inserts and transducer activated tools for ultrasonically activated tooth-cleaning tools.

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Obtained a \$17+ million jury verdict and permanent injunction, plus an ongoing royalty payment during a transition period in patent infringement litigation involving four touch-screen user-interface patents for hemodialysis machines and related disposable products in the Northern District of California.

In the area of design patent infringement litigation, Kara has been involved in litigation and ITC proceedings concerning the automotive after-market parts, consumer products, and power tool industries.

Trademarks & Trade Dress

Kara has vast experience in the enforcement and defense of trademarks and trade dress, Lanham Act claims and advertising claims. She has represented several famous and distinguished brands across a variety of industries and has led enforcement campaigns against anti-counterfeiting, grey market goods, and IP infringement.

Counseling

Kara combines decades of counseling, trial, and litigation experience with practical business applications to assist clients in matters involving technology, patents, design patents, trade secrets, copyrights, trade dress, and trademarks. Her practice also involves counseling and assisting individuals and businesses with intellectual property rights, business issues, and litigation. In addition to representing U.S.-based clients, she also advises international businesses seeking to do business in the United States.

She helps businesses identify the intellectual property that needs protection and assists with matters including:

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Trademark clearance opinions and searches.

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Counseling and monitoring to confirm that intellectual property rights are used properly and effectively.

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Negotiating and drafting licenses, agreements, and transactions related to the rights obtained, domestically and internationally.

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Creating enforcement programs and procedures that promote effective use of the intellectual property and policing against improper use of the intellectual property rights by others.

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Providing opinions and establishing policies and procedures for individuals and companies to avoid conflict with the intellectual property rights of others.

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Pursue or defend IP-based litigation claims and defenses (patent, trademark, copyright, DMCA, and trade secrets), as well as business and contract-based litigation claims for this industry.