

Plaintiffs Bar Perspective: Debbie Dudley Branson

Debbie Dudley Branson is an attorney with The Law Offices of [Frank L. Branson](#) in Dallas. As a fourth-generation attorney, she maintains a passionate belief that individual lawyers have an obligation to be community leaders, public servants and forces for positive change.



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Branson is the immediate past chairwoman of the [Parkland Health & Hospital System Board](#) of Managers in Dallas and has served as president of the [Texas Trial Lawyers Association](#) and the Dallas Women's Foundation. A presidential appointment led to a position on the Federal Aviation Management Advisory Council, and her position as co-chair and acting chairwoman of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation. She also served on Hillary Clinton's Health Care Policy Working Group.

Since 1983, she has practiced with The Law Offices of Frank L. Branson as part of a trial team on a full spectrum of cases. Much of her work is concentrated behind the scenes, focusing on litigation strategies that include focus groups, attitudinal surveys, jury selection, witness preparation, and jury debriefing.

Additionally, her leadership of the Parkland Board led to the Texas Healthcare Trustees Star Award. Branson is also the recipient of the 87th annual Linz Award as well as the Susan B. Anthony Award, bestowed on women who exemplify independence, persistence, determination and dedication in obtaining equal rights for all.

Q: What's the most rewarding aspect of working as a plaintiffs attorney?

A: I'm a proud fourth-generation lawyer having come from a family of lawyers. My dad sat on the Arkansas Supreme Court; my grandfather and great grandfather were lawyers. I married a lawyer and our two children are trained lawyers as well as our son-in-law. So, among all of us, there is a lot of shared legal experience.

We understand the practice of law is a calling worthy of our best efforts. In fact, it's a privilege. Being a trial lawyer allows you to provide a level playing field in the courtroom for

ordinary people. It's really that simple. Put in the clearest possible terms, we are determined to protect the legal rights of all Americans so that deserving individuals get justice, wrongdoers are held accountable, and insurance companies are required to pay legitimate claims. When that happens, it makes for a good day's work.

Q: What skill do you feel is most important for achieving success as a plaintiffs attorney?

A: The most important skill as a plaintiffs attorney is listening well. Without it, critical nuances in questions and answers, both in the courtroom and out, can be missed. That small, but all important, piece of information might be the difference between winning and losing the case. In the alternative, it can mean fully understanding all the elements of your client's injuries and/or damages.

Q: When it comes to trial strategy, what's the biggest difference between representing a plaintiff and representing a defendant?

A: The biggest difference between representing the plaintiff and defendant is the plaintiff has the burden of proof, and therefore, must have and tell a story that motivates the jury to act decisively and in a manner that will make a difference in the case. Without the plaintiff being able to motivate the jury, the defense wins.

Q: What advice would you offer to young lawyers interested in practicing as a plaintiffs attorney?

A: The most important advice I might offer is that we need to be consistent in doing the little things right if we want to have any hope of doing the big things right – in terms of our moral and ethical compass. You're ready to do what's right when it really counts because you've done what's right when it barely counted.

Q: What's one thing defense attorneys don't understand about practicing as a plaintiffs attorney?

A: When it comes to practicing law, sometimes the obvious seems lost — that is, our clients are real people with real injuries and real lives, who are counting on us to restore some measure of hope, dignity and self-respect to their lives. The trial is their one day in court and

its outcome is often determinative of their ability to move forward with appropriate care and support.