



## ATTORNEY PROFILE

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ROBERT B. HEMLEY  
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When a law school friend – Gravel & Shea attorney William Post – suggested moving from New York City to Burlington, Vermont to work in a small law firm, Bob Hemley decided to try it out for a year. Forty years later, that small firm has grown to more than 20 attorneys, and Hemley is one of the most respected litigators in Vermont.

After short stints in a Wall Street firm and at the U.S. Attorney’s Office in New York, Hemley joined Gravel & Shea in 1976. For a time, he was the only litigator in the office. Over the last four decades, he has built up a practice focused on litigating large, complex cases. The composition of his caseload changes from year to year, but Hemley primarily handles commercial, medical malpractice, personal injury, and products liability cases.

He is particularly well known for his First Amendment expertise, having received the Matthew Lyon Award from the Vermont Press Association for lifetime achievement in First Amendment work. As a new litigator in the Gravel & Shea practice in the late 1970s, Hemley began handling litigation for Clarke Gravel’s client, the Burlington Free Press. Since then, Hemley has represented the majority of print media outlets in the state, including the Times Argus and the Rutland Herald, as well as some broadcast outlets and national media organizations. He likes the specialized nature of the cases and recently won a landmark victory in an anti-SLAPP case representing the Rutland Herald, alongside Gravel & Shea attorney Matthew Byrne.

After more than forty years in court, it’s not surprising that Hemley also has a few high-profile cases under his belt. In *Browning-Ferris Industries of Vermont v. Kelco Disposal, Inc.*, a predatory pricing antitrust case, he won, “against overwhelming odds,” a judgment for his clients of \$50,000 in compensatory damages and \$6 million in punitive damages. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court on a challenge of the punitive damages award, one of the first punitive damages challenges in the country. The Supreme Court affirmed the Second Circuit’s decision.

Even as he talks about the big wins, Hemley’s demeanor remains, as in the courtroom, calm and measured. His successes have led to constant recognition as one of the best litigators in Vermont, but he isn’t one to get caught up in hype. “Any case can be won or lost for reasons sometimes well beyond the control of the advocates,” he says. “You can put on your best case by understanding the facts as thoroughly as possible and by treating everyone involved with respect. You take each case as it comes and work it in a way that uses the available facts most favorably. Sometimes it’s easy. Sometimes it’s harder. Sometimes you’re surprised by the way things turn out – positive or negative. I try to be thorough,” he says. “But also decent.”

For more information about Robert B. Hemley, visit [www.gravelshea.com/our-team/shareholders/robert-b-hemley](http://www.gravelshea.com/our-team/shareholders/robert-b-hemley).