

William E. Ridgway

Skadden

Partner, Chicago and Palo Alto

Co-Head, Cybersecurity and Data Privacy; White Collar Defense and Investigations; Litigation; Artificial Intelligence; Blockchain and Digital Assets



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Education

J.D. Stanford Law School, 2006
(with distinction; Articles Editor,
Stanford Law Review)

B.S., Stanford University, 2003
(with distinction)

Bar Admissions

Illinois

California

U.S. District Court for the
Northern District of Illinois

U.S. Court of Appeals for the
Second and Seventh Circuits

William E. Ridgway is co-head of Skadden's global Cybersecurity and Data Privacy Practice. He is a former federal prosecutor with extensive trial and investigations experience who advises companies on their most sensitive cybersecurity, data privacy, artificial intelligence and white collar matters.

Mr. Ridgway has been recognized as a leading lawyer for crisis management, cybersecurity, data privacy, artificial intelligence and high-stakes white collar matters by several industry outlets. He regularly leads the defense of investigations conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, state attorneys general, the California Privacy Protection Agency and other U.S. and foreign regulators. These investigations frequently involve matters related to cybersecurity, data privacy, artificial intelligence, the False Claims Act, financial fraud and trade secret theft.

Mr. Ridgway has led the incident response and associated investigations for some of the most high-profile cybersecurity incidents in recent years, and his clients include financial institutions; technology, energy, insurance and health care companies; defense contractors; data brokers; and e-commerce retailers. He also often leads privacy and data security investigations and litigations around the country.

Mr. Ridgway's experience includes:

- **Data breach and ransomware response** — advising *Fortune* 50 and other global companies in responding to ransomware attacks and other major cyber incidents
- **Government enforcement matters** — representing businesses, their boards and executives in government investigations and enforcement proceedings brought by a range of U.S. and foreign agencies and regulators
- **Data privacy, artificial intelligence and technology litigation** — defending companies in class action litigation related to cybersecurity incidents and in artificial intelligence and data privacy matters, which frequently involve complex and multijurisdictional issues
- **Internal investigations** — conducting sensitive, complex internal investigations, enabling companies to take strategic action to manage crises, avoid regulatory actions and limit legal and reputational exposure
- **Trials and arbitrations** — representing businesses and executives in high-stakes trials and arbitrations
- **Compliance and risk assessments** — conducting compliance and risk assessments on behalf of global firms, in addition to advising these clients on cybersecurity incidents, data privacy and artificial intelligence issues
- **Crisis incident simulation and training** — providing various crisis incident simulations and tabletop exercises for members of executive teams of international companies

In recognition of his work, Mr. Ridgway has been ranked as one of the top lawyers for cybersecurity and white collar matters globally, including repeatedly as part of *Cybersecurity Docket's* Incident Response Elite (including in its 2026 edition), which recognizes "the best incident response lawyers in the business." A fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers, he has been selected to *Global Investigations Review's* 40 Under 40 list of the

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world's leading investigations lawyers and named one of *Lawdragon's* 500 Leading Global Cyber Lawyers, 500 Leading Global Litigators, 500 Leading Litigators in America, 500 Leading Lawyers in America, 100 Leading AI & Legal Tech Advisors and 500 Global Leaders in Crisis Management. In addition, *Chambers USA* has recognized Mr. Ridgway in its Privacy & Data Security/Cybersecurity, Privacy & Data Security/Litigation and White-Collar Crime & Government Investigations categories, noting he is "called upon to represent clients in high-stakes white-collar proceedings, regularly handling complex investigations and cybersecurity matters." Clients in *Chambers* have commented that Mr. Ridgway is an "effective advocate who can be trusted with sensitive matters," is "so smart, so creative and incredible on his feet" and that he "is detail-oriented, a phenomenal writer and is excellent in court." Clients describe Mr. Ridgway as "calm, collected and brilliant," praising his "practical advice and critical feedback to clients facing serious privacy issues with significant consequences" and his "exceptional ability to see around the corner to what may be coming next." He was also named *The Best Lawyers in America's* 2026 Chicago Litigation - Regulatory Enforcement Lawyer of the Year and has been recognized in its Commercial Litigation and Regulatory Enforcement categories. Additionally, he was named one of *Crain's Chicago Business's* 2023 Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys and 2021 Notable Gen X Leaders in Law.

Prior to joining Skadden, Mr. Ridgway was an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, where he served as the deputy chief of the National Security and Cybercrimes Section. In this role, he oversaw and managed all of the office's cybercrime, data breach and intellectual property cases. During this time, Mr. Ridgway also held the positions of national security cyber specialist, computer hacking and intellectual property coordinator, and digital currency coordinator, handling cryptocurrency-related matters.

In his eight years as a federal prosecutor, Mr. Ridgway tried many cases and handled a wide range of high-profile cybercrime and intellectual property matters, including the prosecution of an international cybercrime ring responsible for stealing over \$100 million, as well as prosecutions of the leaders of two prominent hacking groups for hundreds of cyberattacks that targeted businesses, nonprofits and government bodies around the globe. Mr. Ridgway also led the prosecution of the operators of one of the world's largest online piracy rings.

Mr. Ridgway has received many awards and recognition throughout his career, including the Director's Award for Superior Performance from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys for prosecuting an international racketeering enterprise (2015) and the Chicago Crime Commission's Stars of Distinction Award for the prosecution of criminal enterprises operating in Chicago (2009 and 2010). In addition, he was selected as a Leadership Greater Chicago Fellow in its 2017 class.

Mr. Ridgway has been a lecturer at University of Chicago Law School since 2011, where he teaches a class on cybercrime.

Experience

Deputy Chief of National Security and Cybercrimes Section for the Northern District of Illinois (2014-16)

Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois (2008-14)

Law Clerk, Hon. Richard A. Posner, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (2007-08)

Law Clerk, Hon. Vaughn R. Walker, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California (2006-07)