



## James M. Ash

### OF COUNSEL

THE LINK VIRTUAL OFFICE

PHONE: 816.983.8137

EMAIL: JAMES.ASH@HUSCHBLACKWELL.COM

KANSAS CITY, MO\*

PHONE: 816.983.8000

### OVERVIEW

As a transactional lawyer, Jim considers himself a puzzle-solver. He pulls together pieces of each transaction and helps clients analyze which deals will move them toward their long-term goals.

Jim's engagements include cross-border mergers and acquisitions, restructurings, governance, securities, international expansion and general corporate matters. He is well known for his ability to understand the human side of transactions and keep peace during stressful negotiations.

With deep roots in agriculture, Jim draws on his industry knowledge and analytical skills to help clients find their best solution. He was raised in a small farming community in California and gained hands-on experience in the food systems industry as a plant manager for Sunkist. As a lawyer, he has guided some of the world's best-known food and food systems companies, investors and financiers. This distinct background allows Jim to understand his clients' operations with an insider's perspective.

### Presidential Appointment

*"Jim's brilliant. I look for his counsel in more than just securities and exchange issues. He's been extraordinarily valuable to our company."*

— CEO, International Restaurant Company

### Industry

Food Systems

### Services

Canada, Mexico, Central, & South America

Corporate

Europe, the Middle East, & Africa

International

Mergers & Acquisitions

Securities & Corporate Governance

From 2015-2022, Jim served as an appointee of President Barack Obama to the seven-member Board for International Food and Agricultural Development. The Board counsels the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on matters relevant to world hunger and food insecurity.

### Featured Experience

#### **Multinational Transaction Realigns Client's U.S. and EU Interests**

In a four-party transaction that realigned an entire manufacturing industry across the United States and Europe, Jim and his team led the client through a series of acquisitions, joint ventures and exclusive supply arrangements. The team skillfully and diplomatically coordinated the interests of Swedish, German, Italian and U.S. parties, the workers' councils at plants in Germany and Italy, the Italian government and the EU competition commission. The result? The successful simultaneous closing of three transnational acquisitions and approval by the EU competition commission of the longest exclusive supply agreement allowed at that time.

### Experience

- Advised Illuminet on \$1.3 billion sale to VeriSign Inc.
- Served as outside general counsel for Triumph Foods LLC, a leading pork processor in the United States.
- Represented AMC Theatres in \$1.1 billion acquisition of Carmike Cinemas and \$1.2 billion purchase of Odeon & UCI Cinemas Group.
- Advised Freightquote.com on \$400 million sale to C.H. Robinson.
- Represented Russell Stover Candies, Inc. in \$1.6 billion sale to Lindt & Sprüngli AG. Transaction spanned two continents, included multiple manufacturing and retail facilities, involved significant U.S. and international tax planning, and included key antitrust approvals.
- Represented Applebee's International Inc. in \$1.2 billion acquisition by IHOP Corp. In connection with this transaction, Applebee's entered into securitization transaction with respect to its U.S. franchise agreements, U.S. company-owned restaurants and U.S. intellectual property rights.

## Experience

- Counseled American Italian Pasta Co. in \$1 billion merger with Ralcorp Holdings Inc. Negotiated merger agreement, prepared tender offer documents and all public company filings, and advised board of directors on all aspects of sale.
- Represented Monterey Gourmet Foods Inc. during acquisition by Korean company Pulmuone Holdings Co. The \$50 million transaction was structured as tender offer followed by short-form merger.
- Handled dozens of restaurant chain and grocery chain acquisitions.
- Counseled industry leading agribusiness investment company Oppenheimer Industries Inc. in structuring livestock and ranching investment partnerships.
- Represented Lansing Trade Group, LLC in its acquisition by The Andersons through complex cash-and-stock deal valued at \$305 million.

## Recognition

- *The Best Lawyers In America*®
  - Corporate Law, 1995-2026
  - Mergers and Acquisitions Law, 1995-2026
  - International Mergers & Acquisitions, 2020-2026
  - Best Lawyers® Mergers and Acquisitions Law "Lawyer of the Year," Kansas City, 2015
  - Best Lawyers® Corporate Law "Lawyer of the Year," Kansas City, 2010
- BTI Client Service All-Stars, 2017
- *Chambers USA*, Corporate/Mergers & Acquisitions Law, 2010-2019; *Senior Statesman*, 2020-2023
- *IFLR 1000 United States*
  - Mergers & Acquisitions (Missouri), Experienced Consultant, 2025
  - M&A; Capital Markets: Debt (Nationwide), Notable Practitioner, 2018-2019
- Martindale-Hubbell AV Preeminent

## Education

- J.D., University of California, Los Angeles School of Law
  - Order of the Coif
  - *UCLA Law Review*
  - *UCLA-Alaska Law Review*, Editor
- B.A., University of California, Los Angeles
  - *summa cum laude*

## Admissions

- Missouri

\*Contact Jim to set up an in-person consultation by appointment in the Kansas City office.



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