


W. Wilder Knight, II

Of Counsel

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W. Wilder Knight II is a member of Pryor Cashman's Media + Entertainment, Banking + Finance, Intellectual Property, and Corporate Groups.

Fluent in German, he is also a member of the German practice and works with numerous clients in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Wilder has more than 25 years of transactional experience representing major corporations, investment funds, entrepreneurs, and media companies in ventures in Europe, Asia, and North and South America.

Wilder helped establish many companies in the United States on behalf of his German clients. He also represented several major German clients in the acquisition of companies and assets in the U.S., including advising one bidder on the contemplated purchase of some of the assets of the bankrupt Leo Kirsch companies. He has worked with many companies in the development, production, and distribution of motion picture and television programs, as well as the development and distribution of computer gaming, distance learning software, and related technologies.

In addition to working with U.S.- and Europe-based film and television producers, Wilder has represented several of Germany's major advertising agencies and has worked closely with Brazilian, British, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish, and Swedish law firms on international co-productions.

Wilder's experience also includes representing a number of major German and U.S. investment funds in their media ventures in the U.S., including advising on litigation strategies where investment performance has not lived up to expectations. Building litigation teams with his colleagues at Pryor Cashman, he has commenced major lawsuits in New York and California and ultimately negotiated many multimillion-dollar settlements against several important Hollywood producers.

Negotiating Strategic Film Financings + Business Ventures

Borrowers as well as lenders rely on Wilder's deep knowledge of entertainment financing and his ability to structure sound, goal-oriented deals. His representations include:

- Negotiating a \$20 million print and advertising (P&A) loan for the U.S. distribution of a \$50 million European film
- Advising on a \$40 million acquisition of a U.S.-based publishing company by a major German publishing house
- Providing counsel to the lender in a \$15 million financing for a slate of films produced by a leading New York independent production company

- Structuring a major French television production company's Latin American operations and coordinating tax counsel in five countries
- Negotiating a joint venture agreement between a Los Angeles-based animation production company and Malaysian partners to create an off-shore production facility
- Advising several entrepreneurs in the establishment, operation and sale of their companies
- Providing financing counsel to producers of reality and drama television projects
- Representing several high-net-worth individuals in their funding and support of independently produced documentary films (including several that were Academy Award nominees, winners or short-listed for the award); advice includes vetting proposals and production teams to confirm project viability
- Advising clients on how new technologies are changing traditional business models

Legal Counsel to Filmmakers and Celebrities

Wilder has worked with many of the entertainment industry's legendary directors, writers, and producers, as well as sports celebrities. An experienced negotiator, he has crafted deals with one of Brazil's major soccer stars, an Academy Award-winning British actor, a boxing legend, and a NASCAR driver in a variety of film and branding projects.

Many of the films Wilder has worked on have enjoyed commercial and critical success. His counsel on matters ranging from financing to production to distribution is reflected in scores of legal and production credits for domestic and foreign releases, including:

- "The Cove," winner of the Academy Award for Best Documentary
- "Lambert & Stamp," documentary about the management team that discovered the rock band "The Who," premiered at Sundance Film Festival and was later acquired for distribution by Sony Classics
- "Chasing Ice," shortlisted for Best Documentary for the Academy Award, an Academy Award nominee for Best Song in a documentary, and an Emmy Award winner
- "Racing Extinction," Emmy-nominated documentary by the producers of "The Cove" and selected for the Main Competition at the Sundance Film Festival (2015)
- "Alive Inside," winner of the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival
- "The Betrayal-Nerakhoon," an Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary and an Emmy Award winner
- "Mad Hot Ballroom," a film shortlisted for the Academy Award for Best Documentary that, at the time, received the highest advance ever paid for a documentary film
- "Buck," shortlisted for the Academy Award for Best Documentary

Wilder has been invited to speak around the world on topics ranging from motion picture production and financing in the modern digital age to the importance of the documentary film as the last independent journalistic voice in a world where media is controlled by major corporations or government. He has spoken at film festivals and industry events in Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Cleveland, Santa Cruz (Bolivia), Malmö, and other cities. He has also made presentations at leading film schools in the United States, Sweden, Germany, and Cuba.

Wilder has also been an adjunct professor, teaching film finance and fundraising at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.

Services

- Banking + Finance
- Celebrity Branding + Talent Representation
- Copyright
- Corporate
- Intellectual Property
- International
- Film, TV + Podcast
- SEC + Corporate Governance

Education

- University of Virginia (J.D., 1985)
- Columbia University (M.I.A., 1985)
- Yale College (B.A., 1978)
 - magna cum laude

Community

- Board Member, Oceanic Preservation Society
- Board Member, International Center for Conciliation (ICFC)
- Board Member, The Terma Foundation
- Founding Board Member and Advisory Board Member, Reel Works Teen Filmmaking

Admissions

- New York, 1986

Languages

- German
- Swedish
- Portuguese
- French
- Spanish

Academic Achievements

- After earning his J.D. in 1985, Wilder was a DAAD Grant Recipient and did a one year post-graduate fellowship at the Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches und internationales Privatrecht (legal research institute), in Hamburg, Germany.