

NEWS & INSIGHTS

11TH CIRCUIT AFFIRMS LIGHTFOOT DEFENSE WINS IN PRODUCT LIABILITY LAWSUIT

March 4, 2026

In a ruling issued on Feb. 18, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit affirmed an August 2024 defense win for Lightfoot, Franklin & White LLC client TSI Inc. in a product liability lawsuit.

Partner **Terry McCarthy** argued the appeal before the 11th Circuit in Dec. 2025. Partners **Adam Peck**, **Sanford Hooper** and **W. McKinley Dunn** led the **2024 trial win** in Mobile federal court.

The suit originated after the plaintiff sustained a catastrophic upper extremity injury while working at an Alabama mill in 2021. The plaintiff alleged that TSI's trim waste conveyor belt was negligently designed, and that there should have been a barrier guard on the nonmotorized end of the belt.

Lightfoot successfully argued the conveyor belt met both industry safety standards and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and was well protected from unintentional contact due to its location. The defense team also argued that the plaintiff's own negligence contributed to his injuries, thus barring his claim for damages under Alabama law.

On appeal, the key question for the 11th Circuit was whether it was proper for the district court to admit an administrative law judge's ruling that TSI complied with applicable machine guarding regulations.

"This case turns on whether the absence of a safety guard made the conveyor belt unreasonably dangerous. The ALJ's determination that Wallace's employer complied with applicable machine guarding regulations makes it more likely—even if just by a bit—that the equipment did not require a guard," the 11th Circuit wrote. "We see no abuse of discretion in the district court's Rule 402 ruling."

McCarthy's practice focuses largely on appellate work, and he is regarded as an authority on evidence issues in Alabama.

Peck has more than 30 years of experience litigating cases involving toxic torts, product liability and catastrophic injuries nationwide.

Hooper focuses on product liability, premises liability, and lawsuits involving catastrophic automobile and trucking accidents.

Dunn helps clients navigate all stages of civil litigation, including breach of contract, fraud, personal injury, medical malpractice, real estate disputes, insurance bad faith and other commercial tort claims.