

Kate S.M. Pitzak

Special Counsel

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Focus Areas

Leaves of Absence and Disability Accommodation
Discrimination and Harassment
Hiring, Performance Management and Termination
Wage and Hour
Litigation and Trials
Higher Education

Overview

Kate S.M. Pitzak is an experienced attorney who has a multi-jurisdictional practice representing employers in matters involving employment, labor law and higher education. She helps clients stay current and compliant with employment law developments by auditing human resources practices, developing compliance strategies, providing workplace training to management and human resources staff, providing advice regarding minors in the workplace and drafting employee handbooks, policies, and employment agreements. Kate has extensive trial experience, having conducted numerous jury and non-jury trials in several different jurisdictions.

Kate has broad subject matter experience and significant knowledge involving claims such as:

- Discrimination based on sex, race, national origin, age, religion, disability and pregnancy
- Sexual harassment
- Retaliation (including whistleblowing)
- Defamation, tortious interference claims, and other employment torts
- Class and PAGA wage and hour actions

She also advises, represents, and trains management clients in various other areas of employment and labor law, including:

- Discrimination, harassment, and retaliation
- Wrongful termination
- Employee handbooks and related personnel policies
- Policy and various paid time off benefits changes and related strategy issues

She regularly counsels clients with all aspects of federal, California and Hawaii leave laws, including navigating the interactive process and reasonable accommodations. Kate also provides legal advice and counsel and represents higher education institutions on all aspects of employment law and Title IX litigation and investigations. In addition to serving as a neutral investigator, Kate also provides advice and counsel to employers on conducting workplace investigation matters, assisting with performance management and progressive discipline, handling employee complaints and employee requests for accommodations.

Kate has represented clients against employment cases filed with the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission and the EEOC. Kate is a former certified court-appointed arbitrator and has helped resolve a number of cases involving homeowner disputes and personal injury claims. She has represented homeowner associations, condo associations and small businesses on a variety of business, tort and employment related claims.

Before joining the firm, Kate's practice included litigating cases in state and federal court on claims involving civil rights violations, personal injury, will disputes, nuisance claims and contract disputes.

After law school, Kate was a judicial clerk for the Hon. Daniel R. Foley and Judge Alexa D.M. Fujise of the Intermediate Court of Appeals, State of Hawaii.

Professional and Community Affiliations

- Member, California Lawyers Association
- Member, Contra Costa County Bar Association
- Member, Bar Association of San Francisco
- Member, American Bar Association
- Secretary, Walnut Creek Toastmasters, 2021-2024
- Member, Health and Wellness Committee, California Lawyers Association, 2021-2023

Recognition

- Named, Rising Star, Hawaii, *Super Lawyers*, 2012

Education

J.D., Seattle University School of Law, 2004, *cum laude*

B.A., Pacific Lutheran University, 1998

Bar Admissions

California
Washington
Hawaii
Texas

Courts

U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit
U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit
U.S. District Court, Central District of California
U.S. District Court, Northern District of California
U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas
U.S. District Court, District of Hawaii

Publications & Press

Meal Break Auto-Deduct Policy Results in Class Action

SHRM Online

November 8, 2017

Speaking Engagements

Littler Hawaii Breakfast Briefing

Honolulu, HI

June 21, 2024

COVID – A Current Update on Relevant Workplace Matters

2022 Public Sector Conference, San Francisco, CA

May 6, 2022