

Brenna M. Woodley

Counsel

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Brenna Woodley is a skilled litigator and counselor who takes a holistic approach to her client's labor and employment matters and other class action matters. In addition to her years of experience counseling employers and litigating the full spectrum of labor and employment matters before federal and state courts and in arbitrations and administrative proceedings before government agencies, Brenna also has extensive experience in the nonprofit sector. She has worked in direct services as a social worker and in board of directors leadership roles within nonprofit organizations, helping them to set and achieve their strategic goals, including diversity and inclusion objectives. Her experience in the areas of strategic planning and talent retention and development informs her work and client relationships.



As a litigator, Brenna represents employers of all sizes across a broad range of industries, including aerospace, oil and gas, transportation, manufacturing, health care, insurance, and financial services. She regularly litigates both individual plaintiff and class and collective action cases, defending employers in complex litigation involving discrimination and harassment allegations, wage and hour and pay equity issues, disputes over trade secrets, breaches of restrictive covenants and other intellectual property issues, ERISA litigation, unfair labor practice charges, and other class action disputes.

Outside the courtroom, Brenna provides day-to-day employment counseling for clients. She regularly conducts investigations of sexual harassment, whistleblower and other employment claims, and assists clients in developing policies and best practices, all with an eye toward avoiding litigation, if possible, and succeeding in litigation when it is necessary. Brenna's counseling work also includes advising businesses on compliance with government-issued COVID-19 guidance and mandates as well as collective bargaining and related labor-management matters.

Brenna also devotes time to proactive training and policy development for clients. She is a frequent speaker and trainer on topics such as diversity and inclusion and promoting a healthy work environment. She has trained managers from the front lines to the C-Suite on these topics, including in response to the #MeToo movement. Committed to advancing diversity in the legal profession as well, Brenna regularly participates in initiatives aimed at supporting women and other diverse lawyers in the profession.

In her free time, you can find Brenna, who founded her own charity and serves on several charitable boards, doing volunteer work or out for a run along the lakefront.

EXPERIENCE

Representative Engagements

- Brenna successfully defeated a motion for conditional certification of a putative collective action against a manufacturing company alleging unpaid overtime in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act and state wage and hour laws, a victory that resulted in an early settlement on favorable terms for the client.
- Brenna has handled numerous company investigations, including investigations of employment claims involving whistleblower complaints before the Securities Exchange Commission, U.S. Department of Labor, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as well as investigations of allegations of sexual harassment and gender discrimination.
- Brenna has extensive experience litigating sexual harassment and discrimination claims, including counseling and defending employers in cases involving claims by multiple employees within an organization and other highly publicized claims. Brenna also has successfully defended employers in multi-case and other complex litigation involving allegations of sexual assault in the workplace.
- Brenna's labor relations experience includes collective bargaining, arbitrations, handling unfair labor practice charges, counseling employers regarding bargaining agreement provisions, and responding to union organizing campaigns and elections targeting large manufacturers.
- Brenna has represented plan administrators in ERISA litigation, including in high profile company stock class actions.
- Brenna also has extensive experience litigating breach of restrictive covenant and trade secret misappropriation cases, including defending an employer in an employee raiding case involving 90 employees hired from a competitor in the industry, and reaching a resolution on terms favorable to the client.

CREDENTIALS

Education

University of Wisconsin, J.D., 1997
Senior Managing Editor, *Wisconsin Law Review*
Vice President, Student Bar Association
University of Wisconsin, B.A. Social Work 1992, *Phi Kappa Phi*

Bar Admissions

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

Professional Memberships

American Bar Association
Labor & Employment Law Section
Chicago Bar Association
Women in Law Empowerment Forum
Committee Member (2019-present)
OnRamp Fellowship (2015-2016)

Honors & Awards

2022 Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch (Employee Benefits (ERISA) Law, Labor and Employment Law-Management, and Litigation-Labor and Employment), *Best Lawyers*®

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

“D&I Initiatives,” (co-presenter) GC Cannabis Forum (January 21, 2022)

“Trade Secret Remedies and the Inevitable Disclosure Doctrine,” (co-author) *Chapter 14, Intellectual Property Law 2021 Edition*, Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education (IICLE) (April 20, 2021)

“COVID-19: Employment law update and guidance for employers,” (co-author) *BenefitsPRO* (April 16, 2020)

“Sexual Harassment and Workplace Culture,” (presenter) Association of Legal Administrators, Chicago Chapter (March 20, 2018)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Lutheran Child & Family Services of Illinois, Foundation Board (2016-present)

Past Chairman and Trustee of the Board of Trustees (2007-2017)

Bundle of Joy Diaper Bank

Founder and Executive Director (2010-2018)

Chicagoland Lutheran Education Foundation

Board of Directors (2011-2018)

First Immanuel Lutheran Church

Community Foundation Board Member (2010-present)