

Barbara A. Ruga

Of Counsel

Barbara A. Ruga is Of Counsel in Clark Hill's Grand Rapids office where she practices in the Education and Municipal Practice Group as well as the Labor & Employment Law Practice Group. Barb advises and counsels public and private employers on a wide variety of labor law and employment issues. Barb has extensive experience negotiating public school contracts in a context of scarce resources. She has also handled numerous unfair labor practice charges, fact-findings, OCR and EEO claims and related employment litigation. Barb advocates for prevention through education, and to that end focuses on employee training programs to clients and public school organizations.

Barb is a highly sought-after presenter, regularly delivering employment seminars and training programs statewide to employers and their associations, notably the Michigan Association of School Personnel Administrators, the Michigan Association of School Boards, and the Michigan School Business Officials, among others. In addition, for over a decade, Barb has been a frequent lecturer for the Michigan Negotiators Association – presenting at their semi-annual conferences, periodic training institutes, and singlehandedly conducting their winter mini-series across the State.

Examples of recent training programs include:

- "Title IX: What Would You Do...?" (2015)
- "The Evolving Law of Teacher Evaluations" (2015)
- The Clark Hill School Law Academy for Principals, which includes student and employee investigations and discipline, grievance handling and contract administration.
- The 2011 School Law Reforms & Teacher Evaluations (Michigan Negotiators Association, 2011-present)
- "Bargaining Over Money in Difficult Economic Times" (National School Board Association, 2011)
- "Negotiating Effectively in Turbulent Times" (North American Association of Educational Negotiators, 2011)
- "Communication and Responding to Pressure Tactics" (Michigan Association of School Boards, Michigan Association of School Administrators and Michigan School Business Officials, 2011)
- "A New Age for Teacher and Administrative Evaluations" (Michigan Negotiators Association, 2011)
- "New Ways to Communicate Today's Negotiations" (Michigan School Public Relations Association, 2009)
- "Fact Finding: Preparing From Day One" (Michigan Negotiators Association, 2009)
- "Dealing with Crisis Situations" (Michigan Association of School Boards, 2009)

A past president of the Michigan Council for School Attorneys, Barb has been recognized by her peers as a leader in the school labor negotiations field through the prestigious Harlow Claggett award, received in 2007 for her contributions to public school labor negotiations, and has been asked to speak at national school conferences, the National Council of School Attorneys and the North American Educational Negotiators Association. In addition, Barb was named Grand Rapids' 2016 "Lawyer of the Year" for Education Law in the 22nd Edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*. Only a single lawyer in each practice area in each community is honored as the "Lawyer of the Year."

In addition to her legal practice, Barb has been involved in the legal community, as past chair of the Grand Rapids Bar Association Young Lawyers Section, a member of the Judicial Evaluation and Character and Fitness Committees, and former trustee of the Grand Rapids Bar Association.

In 1984, Barb authored and edited the first edition of *Wrongful Discharge Cases In Michigan* for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education (ICLE). Barb continued to author and edit articles and books on employment litigation through 1999. In 1991, she co-authored the *Michigan Business Formbook* and authored and co-authored its supplements for eight years. In 1996, Barb co-authored *Michigan Law of Damages*, Second Edition and wrote chapters in its supplements through 2001. She has also taught several ICLE courses.

In her spare time, Barb loves to spend time with her grandchildren and wants to hike each of our 58 national parks.



Office

Grand Rapids
200 Ottawa NW
Suite 500
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

(616) 608-1105 (phone)
(616) 608-1165 (fax)
bruga@clarkhill.com

Education

J.D., cum laude, University of Michigan Law School, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977

B.A., cum laude, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973

State Bar Licenses

Michigan

Practices, Industries & Services

Education
Labor & Employment

Areas of Emphasis

Collective Bargaining
Employment Counseling
Employment Discrimination
Employment Litigation
Employment Training/Seminars
Employment at Will/Contracts
Equal Employment Opportunity Law
Title IX Compliance and Investigations
Unfair Labor Practice Charges
Wage & Hour Matters

Memberships

- Grand Rapids Bar Association
- Michigan Negotiators Association
- Michigan & National Council of School Attorneys
- State Bar of Michigan

Honors

- Best Lawyers in America - Education Law
- Best Lawyers Lawyer of the Year - Education, Grand Rapids (2016)
- Harlow Claggett Award (2007)
- Leading Lawyer
- Super Lawyers - Michigan

Presentations

- 2016 Clark Hill & Plante Moran School Law & Finance Seminar Presentation on January 9, 2016