

Vanessa M. Kelly

Member

Vanessa Kelly strategizes with employers to minimize their legal risks and optimize the employee experience, to help companies focus on their business.

Clients partner with Vanessa Kelly when looking to create and foster respectful workplaces that comply with national and state employment standards. Vanessa counsels her management clients about their employee relations concerns. This counseling may include any manner of employment issues. For example: terminations, accommodating disabilities, workplace misconduct, protecting key employees and proprietary information, reductions in force, and using policies to avoid disputes. She creates employment and other transactional agreements to meet her client's goals, including securing long-term executive employment, restructuring or reorganization, retention agreements, separation agreements and covenants restricting use of confidential information and deterring unfair competition.

Vanessa's work with a variety of industries means she has the broad knowledge her clients need, while maintaining her deep roots within labor & employment. Industries include healthcare, insurance, professional service firms, manufacturers, airlines, auto dealers, professional organization (like accounting and law firms), religious congregations, universities and K-12 schools, and executives.

When a client finds themselves a party to a lawsuit, Vanessa's years of trial experience are invaluable, but her internal investigative work is the key to keeping these suits to a minimum. Vanessa investigates and then guides the client through the investigative process. As part of her preventative strategy, she trains HR teams, managers, and employees on a variety of employment topics. She assists clients with audits and other administrative agency proceedings. As a certified Title IX investigator Vanessa received training on trauma-informed investigation techniques and completed course work to serve as a Title IX hearing officer. In this capacity she provides counseling and compliance services for her university clients.

Vanessa's pragmatic approach to counseling clients recognizes that employees and diverse teams are essential to business success, so she partners with her clients to create inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplaces. As a close confidante to business owners, chief executive officers, general counsel, employment counsel and HR directors, she provides sage advice based on open communication to achieve their objectives making her the collaborative leader her clients need.

Vanessa currently serves as the Co-Chair of the firm's BOLD initiative to promote women within the firm, the legal profession, and the business community. Vanessa also hosts a podcast series, "[Leading in a Lonely World: Conversations with Transformative Leaders](#)," where she interviews community leaders who share their thoughts on leadership against the backdrop of a tumultuous world.



Offices

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Education

J.D., with Honors, George Washington University Law School, Washington DC, 1988
B.A., cum laude, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, 1985

State Bar Licenses

New Jersey
New York

Court Admissions

U.S. District Ct., District of New Jersey 1988
U.S. Court of Appeals, 3rd Circuit 1988
U.S. District Ct., E.D. of New York 1993
U.S. District Ct., S.D. of New York 1993
U.S. District Ct., District of Arizona
U.S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit 1999

Practices, Industries & Services

Healthcare
Labor & Employment

Areas of Emphasis

Commercial Litigation
Employment Counseling
Employment Litigation
Product Liability
Title IX Compliance and Investigations

Memberships

- American Bar Association, Section of Labor & Employment Law, Nominating Committee, Annual Conference Planning Vice Chair, Employee Rights & Responsibilities Committee; co-Chair Executive Agreements and Compensation
- College of Labor & Employment Lawyers, Fellow
- SHRM, HRMA Princeton Chapter, Co-Legislative Director
- New Jersey Bar Association, Appellate Practice & Legal Education Committees; former Chair, Women in the Profession Section

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- Acorn Montessori School, General Counsel (Pro Bono)
 - Employment at Will, ABA/Bloomberg Treatise, Regional Editor and Chapter Author

Honors

- Rated AV-Preeminent Martindale-Hubbell
- Top Legal Minds in New Jersey
- Bar Register Preeminent Women Lawyers

Presentations

- Co-Presenter, Key Employment Laws for Not-for-Profits, Sobol, P.C.
- WEBINAR: What Employers Should Know About NJ Employment Law
- WEBINAR: Title IX: Hot Topics
- BLR FMLA Master Class, Pittsburgh, PA
- Presenter, Mental Health Issues in the Workplace, NJ
- Presenter, Political Expression in a Non-Union Workplace, ABA, L&E, ERR Committee 2018
- Speaker, HRMA-Princeton, Legal Conference, March 8, 2021
- "The Invisible Menace: Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19 on Employees", Clark Hill Webinar, January 2021
- NY and NJ Continue to Expand Employee Rights. Have You Been Keeping Up With the Changes?
- "Effective Use of Motions in Limine in Employment Trials" ABA, Section of Labor & Employment Law, Annual Meeting, New Orleans, November 2019
- "What Not to Do During an Investigation" Garden State SHRM Conference, August 2019
- Presenter, "Age Discrimination Plaintiffs Hit the Jackpot: Lessons Learned from Recent Big-Ticket Jury Awards," Michigan Chamber of Commerce Webinar, June 2017
- Presenter, "Unemployment Hearings - Trends and Tips," Delaware Valley Labor and Employment Law Conference, April 2017
- Presenter, "Hot Topics in Labor and Employment Law," Delaware Valley Labor and Employment Law Conference, April 2017
- WEBINAR: Title IX: Hot Topics