SpencerFane®

James A. Crumlin Jr.

Partner

Contact

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Overview

James Crumlin helps clients navigate the corporate legal landscape and avoid costly mistakes, so employers can focus on running successful operations. He concentrates his practice in the areas of labor and employment law, business and corporate law, litigation and dispute resolution, and entertainment and media law.

Routinely featured in various print and media outlets, James is a well-known employment lawyer committed to providing excellent legal representation for his clients. His legal counsel is regularly sought out by management on issues arising from the employment relationship. James' experience includes union and nonunion arbitration and all forms of employment discrimination litigation. In addition, he conducts in-house training sessions on compliance with the numerous federal and state laws affecting employers — from the Americans with Disabilities Act to the Fair Labor Standards Act to the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

James serves as outside general counsel for several small and midsize businesses, including entrepreneurs and startup ventures in a variety of industries. His experience includes business formation and strategy, funding and investor relations, contracts, employment compliance issues, risk management, litigation, and dispute resolution.

In the area of entertainment and media law, he represents artists, songwriters, authors, managers, and producers in the production, ownership, marketing, and sale of creative works. He also represents television anchors / reporters in contract negotiations with local and national media outlets.

From 1997-1998, he served as a judicial clerk to retired U.S. Chief District Judge William J. Haynes, Jr., (former U.S. Magistrate Judge) for the Middle District of Tennessee.

Encouraged by his mother, and following in his father's footsteps, James says he wanted to be a lawyer for as long as he can remember. What he enjoys most about the profession is "helping employers resolve their employee issues and assisting small businesses in maximizing their potential by focusing on the bottom line and not legal problems." One of the proudest moments in his life was accepting the National Bar Association's induction of his father into its Hall of Fame, posthumously.

James is very active in the Nashville community and a passionate nonprofit supporter. Among the organizations he has been involved with are Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee, Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center, and the Kelly Miller Smith Center Against Abusive Behavior. He is an active member of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church. James serves as trustee and was instrumental in the Project 2000 committee, which oversaw the construction of the church's $17 million facility.

Education

- Vanderbilt University Law School, 1997 (J.D.)
- Vanderbilt University, 1994 (B.A.)

Bar Admissions

- Tennessee, 1999

Court Admissions

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee
- U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado

Community Involvement

- Leadership Nashville, Board Member, 2021-2023; Class of 2011 Opening Retreat Co-Chairperson and Steering Committee Member; Member, Class of 2010
- YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee, Board Member, 2021-2023
- American Baptist College, Board of Trustees, 2015-present; Board of Trustees, Vice Chairman
- Tennessee Department of Human Resources (gubernatorial appointment), Member, Board of Appeals, 2012-present
- lululemon Athletica, Nashville, Brand Ambassador, 2019-present; Member, Leadership Retreat / Huddle, New Orleans, LA, October 2018
- Boys and Girls Club of Middle Tennessee, Inc., Board Member, 2019-present
- Leadership Middle Tennessee, Focus Forward Committee, 2020-2021; Class Selection Committee, 2013-present; Member, Class of 2012
- Capitol Steps Workout, Voted *Best Free Community Workout*, Nashville Fit Magazine, 2018-present; Co-Founder, 2012-present
- Growth Enterprises Nashville, Inc., Board Member, 2013-2015
- Nashville Cares, Inc., Board Member, 2013-2014
- Tennessee Civil Service Commission (gubernatorial appointment), Commissioner, 2010-2014
- New Leaders Council, Advisory Board Member, 2012-present
- Young Leaders Council, Immediate Past Chair, 2013; Board Chair, 2011-2012; Board Member, 2005-2013
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee, Board Member, 2007-present; President, Board of Directors, 2010; President-Elect, Board of Directors, 2009; Long Range Strategic Task Force Committee, 2007-Present; Governance Committee, 2007-present
- Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center, Board Member, 2007-2013; Chair, Board of Directors, 2010-2012; Chair-Elect, Board of Directors, 2009; Personnel Committee Chairperson, 2009; Personnel Committee Member, 2008-present;

Strategic Planning Committee Member, 2008-2009

- Tennessee Repertory Theatre, Advisory Council Member, 2009-2010; Board Member, 2006-2009; Secretary, Board of Directors, 2008-2009; Chair, Board and Leadership Development Committee, 2007-2009
- Nashville Emerging Leaders, Board Member, 2009-present; Class of 2007, Steering Committee Member; Class of 2006, Member
- You Have the Power, Inc., Board Member, 2009-2012
- Vanderbilt Alumni Association, Board Member, 2006-2010; Board Nominating Committee, Member, 2010; Strategic Planning Task Force, Member, 2009-2010; Board Executive Committee, Member, 2008-2010; Distinguished Alumnus Nominating Committee, 2007-2010; Bylaws Task Force Committee, 2007-2010
- Nashville Rotary Club, Member, 2008-present
- Bacchanalian Society of Nashville, Host for Annual Fundraising Events, 2007-present
- Board of Professional Responsibility of the Supreme Court of the State of Tennessee, Hearing Committee Member, 2002-2010
- Association of Vanderbilt Black Alumni, Executive Committee, 2009-2010; Nominating Committee Member, 2009; Reunion / 25th Year Celebration Committee Member, 2009; Member, 1994-present
- Nashville City Club, Board Member, 2007-2009
- Kelly Miller Smith Center Against Abusive Behavior, Board Member, 2007-2009
- Vanderbilt University Law School National Council, Alumni Board Member, 2003-2009
- Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Council, 2006-2008; Chair, Issues Subcommittee, 2007-2008; Chair, Legislative Advocacy Committee 2006-2007
- United Negro College Fund / Fisk Campaign, Honorary Chairperson, 2005-2007
- United Way of Metropolitan Nashville's R.H. Boyd Leadership Society, 2004-present
- The Tennessee Performing Arts Center Management Corporation, Board Member, Young Leaders Council Representative, 2003-2006
- Meharry Medical College National Alumni Advisory Board, 2003-2007
- Nashville Urban League, Member
- Mount Zion Baptist Church, Trustee
- The Capitol Steps Workout – recognized as Best Free Community Workout by *Nashville Fit Magazine*, January / February 2018, The Inspiration Issue
- Nashville Black 40 Under 40, Executive Chair, February 2025

Distinctions

- *Daily Report* and *Law.com,* Southeastern Legal Awards, Distinguished Leader, 2024
- *Best Lawyers in America*
  - Corporate Law, 2024-2027
  - Employment Law – Management, 2026-2027
  - Labor Law – Management, 2024-2027
  - Litigation – Labor and Employment, 2026-2027
- *ALM* Women, Influence & Power in Law Award, Law Firm Ally of the Year, 2024
- *Nashville Business Journal*, Best of the Bar, 2009, 2021, 2024
- Napier-Looby Bar Association, Justice A.A. Birch Outstanding Service Award, 2016
- *Mid-South Super Lawyers,* 2013-2014, 2016-2019
- *Nashville Business Journal*, 40 Under 40, 2011
- Young Leaders Council, Young Leader of the Year, 2010
- Tennessee NAACP, 45 Top Leaders Under 45, 2008
- Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, Nashville Emerging Leader Award for Law

- Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, 20/20 Leadership Alliance, 2007

Memberships

- Napier-Looby Bar Foundation, Fellow, 2014
- Leadership Middle Tennessee, Class of 2012
- Tennessee Bar Foundation, Fellow, 2010-present
- Leadership Nashville, Class of 2010
- Nashville Bar Association, Member, 2003-present
- American Bar Association, Member 2002-present
- Harry Phillips American Inn of Court, Barrister, 1999-2011
- Tennessee Bar Association,Member, 2002-present
    - Board of Governors, Grand Division Governor, Middle Tennessee, 2010-2011, 2011-2012
    - Board of Governors, Executive Committee and Program Committee Chair, 2011-2012
    - Board of Governors, ex-officio Member, Meetings Committee Chair, 2009-2010
    - Leadership Law, Steering Committee Member, Classes 2007-2011
    - Leadership Law, Class of 2006,
    - Membership Vice Chair for the Membership Committee, Young Lawyers Division, 2004-2005
    - Napier-Looby Bar Association Representative, Board of Directors, Tennessee Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, 2003-2004
- American Bar Association, Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section (TIPS), Leadership Academy, 2007-2008
- Young Leaders Council
    - Board of Directors, Chair, 2011-2012
    - Board of Directors, Chair-Elect, 2010
    - Development Committee, Chair, 2007
    - Board Member, 2005-present
    - Member Class #41, Fall 2003
- Napier-Looby Bar Association, Member, 1999-present
    - Executive Board, Program and Events Committee Co-Chair, 2007-2008
- National Association of African Americans in Human Resources, Member, 2004-present

Presentations and Publications

- “DEI Under Government Scrutiny and Political Pressures,” Nashville Bar Association Diversity Summit, September 2026
- “From Severance to Security – Legal and Financial Tips After Losing Your Job,” More Money, More Problems Webinar, July 2025
- “Workplace Diversity,” CUPA-HR Tennessee Chapter Spring Conference, May 2025