SpencerFane®


# Julia M. Vander Weele

Partner

**Contact**

Kansas City

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## Overview

**Julia Vander Weele is an employee benefits attorney who also serves as Office Managing Partner of the Spencer Fane Kansas City office.**

In addition to her leadership at the firm, Julia maintains a full-time legal practice that helps employers and other benefit plan sponsors create and maintain competitive benefits packages that attract and retain talent to help their businesses thrive. Her specific experience in the Employee Benefits Practice group includes managing issues related to the tax code and labor laws related to competitive tax-favored benefit packages that shield leadership from personal liability.

She also advises clients on laws applicable to employee benefit plans and programs, including health care reform and ERISA. Her collaborative approach to client service includes an intentional ability to understand a client's business and unique goals and objectives. She works directly with HR professionals, C-level executives, and business owners to assist them in making informed decisions on their retirement, health, executive compensation, and other benefit plans.

In recognition of her leadership, Julia was named by *Missouri Lawyers Media* as a 2022 Law Firm Leaders honoree and included in *Ingram's* magazine's 2022 *Ingram's* 250 class and 2021 class of Women Executives Kansas City (WeKC).

Julia also remains actively involved in numerous professional and civic organizations. She previously chaired and remains highly involved in the Spencer Fane Women ADVOCATE group.

Outside the firm, Julia also serves as a member of the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, which is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization composed of the leadership of the largest private employers in the Kansas City region. In her role, she is a member of the Civic Council's Kansas City Tomorrow leadership program (KCT), a selective, year-long experience that prepares senior-level business and community leaders for civic engagement in the Kansas City region.

## Education

- University of Iowa College of Law, 1994

- University of Iowa

## Bar Admissions

- Kansas
- Missouri, 1995

## Distinctions

- *Best Lawyers in America*, Employee Benefits (ERISA) Law, 2016-2027
- *Ingram's* 250: The Most Powerful Business Leaders in Greater Kansas City, 2022-2023
  - Women Executives Kansas City, 2021
- *Kansas City Business Journal,* Women Who Mean Business, 2023
- *Missouri Lawyers Media,* Top Managing Partners in Missouri*,* 2023-2025
  - Missouri Women Led Law Firms, 2024
  - Law Firm Leader, 2022

## Memberships

- Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, Board Member
- Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Member
- Kansas Bar Association
- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association
- Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce

## Presentations and Publications

- Quoted. "Four Trends Shaping 2027 Open Enrollment," *HR.com*, September 2026
- "Is Your Retirement Plan Really 'SECURE'? Obligations and Opportunities for Employers Under Secure 2.0," Co-Presenter, February 2023
- DOL's Fiduciary Update: New Proposal to Self-Correct Delinquent 401(k) Contributions, Author, *BenefitsPro*, January 2023
- "2022: From the Great Resignation to Quiet Quitting, Plus Other Employment Law and Employee Benefits Developments," Co-Presenter, November 2022
- "ERISA Issues for Law Firms and Businesses," Presenter, Annual Meeting of the Missouri Bar and Judicial Conference, September 2022
- "Now What? Evaluating the Risks and Options for Group Health Plan Sponsors After Dobbs," Co-Presenter, August 2022
- "Kansas City-Area Lawyers Say Rapid Change in Abortion Law Raises Risks For Employers," Quoted, *Kansas City Business Journal*, July 2022
- "Supreme Court Issues Vaccination Mandate Decisions: Where We Stand Today," Quoted, *BenefitsPro*, January 2022
- "Still Plenty to Consider for COVID-Related Benefit Mandates," Author, *BenefitsPro*, January 2022
- "KC Lawyer Tackles Tricky Compliance Questions on Covid Benefits," Quoted, *Kansas City Business Journal*, January 2022
- "Employer Health Plans Soon Must Pay for At-Home COVID-19 Tests," Quoted, *SHRM*, December 2021
- "Spencer Fane Names Vander Weele as New KC Managing Partner," Quoted, *Kansas City Business Journal*, December 2020

## Related Experience

- Assisting self-funded health plan sponsors with comprehensive HIPAA privacy and security compliance, including drafting policies and procedures, drafting notices of privacy practices, and conducting training.
- Advising 401(k) plan sponsors on plan governance and fiduciary issues, including analyzing fee arrangements, negotiating recordkeeping agreements, and drafting investment policy statements.
- Helping employers analyze their options under the ACA's "play-or-pay" rules, pointing to ways in which they can avoid having to offer expensive health coverage to additional employees or pay onerous penalties.
- Regularly advising clients, including multiemployer Taft-Hartley funds, large publicly-traded corporations, insurance companies, small privately-held employers, and boards of directors on benefits issues such as plan design and administration, tax qualification, regulatory compliance, and fiduciary issues.
- Assisting employers and plan sponsors in negotiating resolution and settlement of Department of Labor investigations.
- Assisting sponsors of defined benefit pension plan in the implementation of lump-sum payment windows, thereby reducing both PBGC premiums and the funding volatility often associated with such plans.
- Advising sponsors of group health plans on the proper design of their employee wellness programs and wellness incentives.
- Advising association health plans on their obligations under the Affordable Care Act and options for avoiding the application of the ACA's small group health insurance community rating requirements.
- Advising employers on the termination of retiree group health plans and other strategies for reducing future liability for retiree health benefits.
- Assisting employers in making submissions to the Department of Labor under the DOL's Voluntary Fiduciary Correction Program.

**Clerk Experience**

- Seventh Judicial District of Iowa