SpencerFane

Stephen (Steve) Rickles

Partner

Contact

Denver

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Overview

Steve Rickles practices in the employee benefits, estate planning, and business and tax exempt organizations areas.

Steve's employee benefits practice focuses on advising businesses, tax exempt organizations, governmental entities, and individuals on all aspects of establishing, operating, and maintaining the legal compliance of retirement and other employee benefits plans, ESOPs, stock option plans, and executive compensation arrangements, guiding them through the complexities of these matters to the best possible decision for their organization. He represents clients in dealing with the IRS and the DOL regarding employee benefits matters and advises clients on fiduciary responsibility and prohibited transactions matters.

Steve's estate planning practice includes estate and gift tax planning, preparation of wills and trusts, financial and health care powers of attorney, and also advising clients about estate freezing techniques and charitable gift planning. Dynasty trusts, charitable lead trusts, and well-crafted succession plans are among the many vehicles He has used to help clients accomplish their tax and personal goals.

Steve also advises clients regarding the operation and taxation of businesses and tax exempt organizations and assists clients with their business succession planning.

Education

- University of Denver, 1980 (LLM)
- University of Denver, 1975 (J.D.)
- Boston University, 1970 (B.A.)

Bar Admissions

- Colorado, 1975

Community Involvement

- Disability Law Colorado, Board of Directors; Former President

Distinctions

- *Best Lawyers in America,* Employee Benefits (ERISA) Law, Trusts and Estates, and Tax, 2011-2025
- *Best Lawyers in America,* Lawyer of the Year, Employee Benefits (ERISA) Law, 2016
- *5280 Magazine*, Denver Top Lawyer, Trusts and Estate Planning, 2015
- *Denver Magazine*, Top Lawyer, Labor and Employment, 2010

Memberships

- Colorado Bar Association, Tax and Trusts Section; Estates Section
- Denver Bar Association
- Greater Denver Tax Counsel Association
- Rocky Mountain Estate Planning Council
- Pacific Coast Area Tax Exempt and Government Entities Council

Presentations and Publications

- "What Can Be Done to Reprice Underwater Stock Options," *HR.com*, December 2022
- "Employee Benefits Risks That Should Be on Your Radar," Association of Corporate Counsel – Colorado Chapter, May 2017
- "Employee Benefit Plans for Tax Exempt Organizations, " 25th Annual Institute on Advising Nonprofit Organizations in Colorado, May 2016
- "Your Estate Plan: What State Is It In?" American Dental Association Annual Sessions, 2005-2015
- "Keeping Mature Plans Relevant," National Center for Employee Ownership Conference, September 2012
- "Common Retirement Plan Mistakes (and How to Fix Them)," Colorado Bar Association Tax Section Meeting, 2012
- "IRS Challenging Family FLP / LLC Annual Exclusion Gifts," *The Colorado Lawyer*

Related Experience

- Maintaining the legal compliance of prototype 401(k), profit sharing, and 403(b) plans maintained by nearly 150 businesses and tax exempt organizations.
- Advised a large family-owned manufacturing business regarding the implementation of an Employee Stock Ownership Plan as a part of a long-term succession plan.
- Advised the owner of a large medical equipment company on the sale of portions of such business to "intentionally defective trusts" for family members in order to help freeze the value of the owner's taxable estate.
- Represented a company that maintained a 401(k) plan with auto-enrollment and auto-escalation provisions in a submission under the IRS' Voluntary Correction Program to correct a series of errors in the operation of the plan.