



SpencerFane®

Sue K. Willman

Partner

Contact

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Overview

Sue Willman is an employment attorney who represents management exclusively on workplace legal issues. She is primarily a preventative employment attorney whose primary focus is to help employers prevent employment-related claims from arising by adopting legally sound, effective, and innovative HR policies, practices, and programs; and make lawful, strategic and practical HR decisions on employee-specific matters that will result in a sound defense position should a claim be asserted.

Sue understands business, the HR profession, and the importance of providing practical and innovative advice and options that meet a client's needs, risk profile, and budget. She is a leading "go to" resource for employers on many employment issues with more than 40 years of experience. She has a unique combination of legal and HR experience as an employment lawyer in private practice, as an in-house employment attorney, and as an HR professional.

Sue focuses her practice in the following areas:

- Labor and Employment
- HR Counseling and Policy Development
- HR and Supervisory Training
- HR Audits and Compliance Programs
- Defense of Employment Charges / Claims Filed with Government Agencies

Education

- University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Law
- University of Chicago
- Northwestern University

Bar Admissions

- Missouri (inactive), 1981
- Kansas (retired), 2010

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri

Community Involvement

- Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network, Board of Directors, 2009–present

Distinctions

- College of Labor and Employment Lawyers, Fellow, 2015–present
- Society for Human Resource Management, Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), 2015–present
- Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association, Baron of the Boardroom, 2015
- Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network (GKC-BLN), Volunteer of the Year Award, 2012
- SHRM-KC, Contributor of the Year Award, 2002
- SHRM-KC, President's Award, 1992
- *Missouri & Kansas Best Lawyers*, Labor and Employment Law, 2008–2021
- *Best Lawyers in America*, 2009–2023
- *Best Lawyers in America*, Women in the Law, Labor and Employment Law, 2016
- Preeminent Women Lawyers, Labor and Employment Law, 2013–present
- *Chambers USA*, Labor and Employment Law, 2012–present
- Martindale–Hubbell, AV Preeminent Lawyer Rating, 1991–present

Memberships

- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 1983–present
 - Employee and Labor Relations Committee, 1999–2003
- Society for Human Resource Management, Kansas City Chapter, 1983–present
- Society for Human Resource Management, Johnson County, Kansas Chapter, 2013–present

Presentations and Publications

- Frequently-requested trainer and presenter on HR and legal topics (including harassment, discrimination, FMLA, ADA, discipline / discharge, FLSA, best HR practices, avoiding the courtroom, and others). She has provided training for employers for more than 30 years and during that same period has made more than 300 professional presentations.
- Sue is a frequent speaker at local and state SHRM conferences and has spoken at the MO-SHRM, KS-SHRM, and CO-SHRM state conferences in recent years.

Related Experience

- Developed innovative ADA compliance programs for employers. These programs include disability accommodation policies, a variety of user-friendly forms and checklists (e.g., for accommodation requests, evaluation of accommodation options, medical certification forms, leaves of absence, fitness for duty evaluations, direct threat / safety evaluations, forms, and other materials).
- Extensive and in-depth knowledge about and experience handling FMLA issues and regularly assists employers with FMLA compliance challenges and attendance issues. She was actively involved in seeking FMLA regulatory reform on behalf of employers for many years. She testified in 2002, 2005, and twice in 2007 before two U.S. Senate committees and the Department of Labor regarding the FMLA.
- Co-authored of an *amicus curiae* brief submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of SHRM in 2002 in the first FMLA case to be heard by the high court (*Ragsdale v. Wolverine Worldwide, Inc.*). The brief included the very argument relied upon by the Supreme Court in reaching its decision.