



## Catherine C. Smith

### Partner

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### OVERVIEW

Catherine Smith is a partner in the firm's Labor, Employment, and Workplace Safety practice. She counsels employers regarding a broad range of employment issues including employee terminations and performance management, disability accommodation, leaves of absence, employee onboarding, employee transfers, and wage and hour compliance. She works with companies of all sizes and stages, from startup companies to multinational corporations, in industries including agribusiness, aquaculture, timber, technology, software, telecommunications, manufacturing, retail, and hospitality.

As a member of both the California and Washington bars, Catherine has significant experience advising national employers with operations in California, Washington, and throughout the United States.

Catherine regularly assists clients with employment matters related to buy-side and sell-side mergers and acquisitions and corporate investment transactions, for emerging, middle market, and Fortune 500 companies. She assists with all aspects of such transactions including employment due diligence, employee transition issues, purchase agreements, and drafting and negotiating restrictive covenant and employment agreements.

Catherine leads K&L Gates' Reduction in Force working group. She has significant experience counseling clients regarding all aspects of reductions in force and voluntary separation and retirement programs. She works with clients to develop strategies to mitigate risk, including developing employee selection processes and reduction in force policies and termination procedures, WARN and disparate impact analysis, WARN notices and other employee communications, compliance with the Older Workers Benefit Protection Act, and separation agreements. Catherine also works with K&L Gates partners outside of the US to assist clients with multinational redundancies.

She regularly drafts and updates a variety of employment-related documents including employment policies and handbooks, offer letters and employment agreements, secondment agreements, incentive compensation and commission agreements, non-compete, invention assignment and non-disclosure agreements, severance agreements, staffing agency agreements, and independent contractor agreements.

Catherine has advised agribusiness clients regarding a variety of employment-related issues and assisted with drafting farm labor contractor agreements, farm and vineyard management agreements, arbitration agreements, employment agreements and service provider agreements.

## PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Prior to joining K&L Gates, Catherine was Counsel at a Los Angeles, California law firm and focused her practice on labor and employment matters.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Recognized in The *Best Lawyers in America*<sup>®</sup> for Employment Law - Management in Seattle, WA, 2024-2026
- Named to the Washington Rising Stars List, 2015-2019
- Named to the Southern California Rising Stars list, 2009-2011

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- Reductions in Force: Strategies to Mitigate Risk, 2024
- [International Reductions in Force: A Case Study](#), 2023
- Navigating Employment Law in Aquaculture – Wage and Hour Update, 2022
- Reductions in Force: Strategies to Minimize Litigation Risk in Downsizing, 2022
- [Looking to 2021: Top Labor and Employment Considerations for Washington Employers](#), 2020
- [“Ok, Let’s Collab!” – When Saying “Yes” Includes Building Out Your Team of Employees, Freelancers and Interns](#), 2020
- Employment Law 101: What Every Lawyer Should Know About Employment Law, 2019
- Microenterprise 101, Employment Law, Wayfind, 2015, 2016 and 2017
- Washington Employment Law Letter, FMLA Master Class, 2012
- Current Wage and Hour Issues, 2011
- Labor and Employment Law Breakfast, 2011
- The Lurking Dangers of California Employment Law, 2011

## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Catherine externed for the Honorable Justice Carlos Moreno of the California Supreme Court.

## EDUCATION

- J.D., University of California, Berkeley School of Law, 2005 (*American Jurisprudence Award in Labor Law; California Law Review, Executive Editor; Berkeley Journal of Employment and Labor Law, Administrative Editor*)
- B.A., Mills College, 2001 (*Dean's List*)

## ADMISSIONS

- Bar of California
- Bar of Washington

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP POWERED BY HUB

- 1 August 2023, California Employment Law Update - August 2023
- July 2023, International Reductions in Force: A Case Study
- 6 January 2023, Washington State Issues New Guidance on Pay Transparency Requirements for Job Postings
- 13 June 2022, Changes to Washington's Paid Family and Medical Leave Program Took Effect on 9 June 2022
- 14 October 2021, California Employment Law Update - October 2021
- 1 October 2021, Employee Arbitration Update: The Ninth Circuit Reverses District Court's Conclusion That California Assembly Bill 51 is Preempted by the Federal Arbitration Act (FAA)
- 10 December 2020, Looking to 2021: Top Labor & Employment Considerations for Washington Employers
- 21 May 2020, "Ok, Let's Collab!" - When Saying "Yes" Includes Building Out Your Team of Employees, Freelancers, and Interns
- 15 April 2020, COVID-19: California Counties and Cities Enact Stricter COVID-19 Policies than California's Statewide Stay-at-Home Order
- 1 April 2020, COVID-19: Washington State Institutes Statewide "Stay Home – Stay Healthy" Order to Combat COVID-19
- 24 March 2020, COVID-19: Los Angeles County Issues Health Order and Guidance Prohibiting Gatherings of 10 Persons or More and Operations of Certain Businesses
- 24 March 2020, COVID-19: California Institutes Statewide "Stay at Home" Order to Combat COVID-19
- 18 December 2018, Working Wise: Five Tips to Prepare for a Union Organizing Drive

- 5 November 2018, #MeToo Movement Inspires Avalanche of New Laws Affecting California Employers
- 29 March 2018, Key Takeaways from the NLRB's Flip-Flop on Joint Employment Standards
- 20 October 2017, Recent Deluge of California Legislation Imposes New Requirements on Employers

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- Co-author, "Reversing Claims of Reverse Religious Discrimination," *Employment Relations Today*, 2007
- Co-author, "Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Affirms the Largest Class Action in History," *Employment Relations Today*, 2007
- Co-author, "Employers Required to Proactively Inquire Into Employees' Eligibility for FMLA Leave," *Employment Relations Today*, 2007
- Co-author, "2006 Supreme Court Year in Review," *Employment Relations Today*, 2007
- Co-author, "The New Court: Predictions About the U.S. Supreme Court's Future Direction," *Employment Relations Today*, 2006
- Co-author, "The Supreme Court Limits Public Employees' First Amendment Rights," *Employment Relations Today*, 2006
- Co-author, "When is 'Unequal' Pay Not Really Unequal?," *Employment Relations Today*, 2006

## NEWS & EVENTS

- 18 November 2025, K&L Gates Assists Acumen Information Systems on Acquisition by Pine Services Group
- 26 September 2025, K&L Gates Advises CDSG HoldCo on Sale of CRU Data Security Group
- 26 March 2025, K&L Gates Advises Nous Infosystems on Strategic Investment by TA Associates
- 16 December 2024, K&L Gates Advises Auto Components Manufacturer Motherson on Acquisition of Japanese Manufacturer Atsumitec
- 24 February 2020, K&L Gates Names 41 New Partners Across Global Platform
- 20 December 2019, K&L Gates Advises Beatty Marketing & Sales on Acquisition by Aspen Surgical Products
- 24 October 2019, K&L Gates Advises Global Infrastructure Partners on Paine Field Passenger Terminal Investment

## AREAS OF FOCUS

- Labor, Employment, and Workplace Safety
- Collective Labor and Works Councils

- Contract Workers
- Employment Disputes
- Employment Investigations
- Employment Issues in Business Transactions
- Human Resource Advice and Compliance
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Wage and Hour

## REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Assisted Center ID Corp. in its sale to American Express Corporation (NYSE: AXP).
- Assisted NexTec Group, Inc., a Seattle, Washington-headquartered industry leading technology consultancy firm, in its acquisition by Evergreen, a family of managed IT services and software partners.
- Assisted WatchGuard Technologies, Inc. in its acquisition of portfolio company ActZero.
- Assisted ProbablyMonsters Inc. in the sale of its subsidiary, Firewalk Studios LLC, to Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC.
- Assisted Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ: MSFT) in its acquisition by merger of RiskIQ, Inc.
- Assisted Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ: MSFT) in its acquisition of Kinvolk GmbH.
- Assisted Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ: MSFT) in its acquisition by merger of Semmler, Inc.
- Assisted ePlus Technology inc., a subsidiary of ePlus inc. (NASDAQ: PLUS) in its acquisition of the assets of Innovative Technology Systems & Solutions, Inc. d/b/a as ABS Technology.
- Assisted ePlus Technology Inc., a subsidiary of ePlus, inc. (NASDAQ: PLUS) in its acquisition of SLAIT Consulting, LLC.
- Assisted Laird Norton Company in its acquisition of Wetherby Asset Management.
- Assisted the SEER Group LLC in its sale to Genstar Capital Partners.
- Assisted Pike Street Capital in its acquisition of substantially all assets of PumpTech, Inc.
- Assisted BEN Group, Inc. in its acquisition of TubeBuddy.