



Brenna M. Woodley

Special Counsel

bwoodley@kelleydrye.com

Chicago
(312) 857-2629

About

Brenna Woodley is an experienced counselor, negotiator, and litigator who represents national and global employers in complex matters across a broad range of industries, including manufacturing, food production, energy, transportation, aerospace, finance, insurance and other professional services, retail, and health care.

Born and raised in a manufacturing town in northeastern Wisconsin, Brenna has a strong Midwestern work ethic and deep dedication to client service. She brings values-based, no-nonsense problem solving to her clients' labor and employment matters. From high stakes collective bargaining and other negotiations to complex investigations and litigation, clients seek Brenna for their most sensitive workplace issues.

Outside of the courtroom, Brenna routinely serves as an outside investigator for C-suite and board-level workplace investigations of allegations of harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and whistleblower reports, and represents companies in proceedings before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, U.S. Department of Labor, and Securities and Exchange Commission involving claims by employees.

She is an experienced negotiator, both in collective bargaining and in individual negotiations involving employment agreements, compensation issues, and separations of high-level employees. Brenna also provides day-to-day guidance to clients' in-house human resources, labor relations, and legal teams, with a focus on practical solutions and risk management.

As a litigator, Brenna represents employers in the full spectrum of employment-related individual plaintiff and class litigation in federal and state courts, arbitrations, and administrative proceedings before government agencies, including cases involving federal and state discrimination and harassment laws, pay equity, trade secrets and restrictive covenant disputes, ERISA, and wage and hour issues. Brenna also has experience litigating unfair labor practice charges before the National Labor Relations Board.

In addition to her years of experience as an attorney, Brenna also has experience in the nonprofit sector. She has worked as a social worker developing programming for children, founded a charity, and has served in leadership roles on charitable boards for organizations providing services to children, helping organizations with strategic planning, fund development, and advocacy work. Her

experience in these areas informs her work for clients and client relationships.

Experience

Successfully defended several large employers in class, multi-case, and other complex litigation involving sensitive workplace allegations, including sexual harassment, race and sex discrimination, and pay equity violations.

Represented manufacturers in labor negotiations and union organizing campaigns, including six weeks of labor negotiations resulting in an agreement that avoided a strike at the client's Indiana plant and two organizing campaigns that resulted in a favorable vote for the employer at the client's Florida facility.

Provided pro bono labor analysis of public sector bargaining agreements covering paramedics, social workers, and police officers so that a municipality could expand its use of preventive mental health crisis response teams.

Represented plan administrators in high profile ERISA class litigation, including company stock cases.

Defeated a motion for conditional certification of a putative collective action against a manufacturing company alleging unpaid overtime in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act and state laws, resulting in an early settlement on favorable terms for the client.

Defended a professional services firm against a motion for preliminary injunction alleging employee raiding and unfair competition involving the hiring of over 90 employees, reaching a favorable resolution for the client.

Honors

The Best Lawyers in America® (Woodward/White, Inc.), (ERISA) Employee Benefits Law, 2025-2027

The Best Lawyers in America® "Ones to Watch" (Woodward/White, Inc.), (ERISA) Employee Benefits Law, 2021-2022

Diversity Lab, OnRamp Fellowship Program (2015 Fellow)

Affiliations

American Bar Association - Labor & Employment Law Section

Chicago Bar Association

National Association of Women Lawyers

Women in Law Empowerment Forum, Attorney Wellness Panel (2019)

Women in Manufacturing Association, member

Community

Lutheran Child & Family Services of Illinois; Chairman of Board of Trustees (2024-present); Foundation Board (2017-2023); Past Chairman and Vice Chair, Board of Trustees (2007-2016, 2022-2023)

Bundle of Joy Diaper Bank, Founder and Executive Director (2010-2018)

First Immanuel Lutheran Church, Community Foundation Board Member (2010-2020)

Related Services

Labor and Employment Counseling and Compliance

Employment Litigation

Organized Labor and Labor Relations

Employment and Employee Benefits

Education

University of Wisconsin Law School, J.D.

- Wisconsin Law Review, Senior Managing Editor

University of Wisconsin–Madison, B.A.

Admissions

Illinois

Courts

U.S. District Court–Northern District of Illinois

U.S. District Court–Eastern District of Michigan