

Helennane Connolly

Partner



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Reston

Labor and Employment
Commercial Litigation
Private Equity
Workplace Investigations
CooleyREG

Helen represents clients across a wide range of employment-related matters including counseling, litigation, arbitration and mediation matters. She routinely advises her clients on terminations, disciplinary actions, reorganizations, internal training programs, reductions in force, individual and group termination decisions, FLSA compliance, misclassification analyses, accommodation of employee disabilities and medical leaves, EEO training, compliance with affirmative action plans and compliance with collective bargaining agreements. She also has experience advising private equity clients on employment-related matters.

Helen has led internal investigations into various harassment and discrimination claims and negotiated employment, noncompete and separation agreements. She frequently drafts employment policies, executive contracts, separation agreements, restrictive covenants and employee handbooks. Prior to 2009, Helen's practice was focused on commercial litigation.

Helen has extensive experience litigating complex disputes in Virginia and Maryland state and federal courts. In particular, Helen has defended employers against claims alleging race, age, disability, and sex discrimination, retaliation, sexual harassment, wrongful discharge, violations of wage and hour laws, misappropriation of trade secrets, commission of business torts and breach of contract. Additionally, Helen has successfully brought business tort claims on behalf of companies and partnerships. She is also experienced in representing employers in defending against charges of discrimination at the administrative agency level.

Since 2006, Helen has second-chaired five jury trials. She has also served as lead counsel in a number of state-level bench trials in the Circuit Courts of Virginia. Since 2006, Helen has handled dozens of depositions and successfully argued numerous dispositive motions for her clients, including motions in the "Rocket Docket." Helen has also handled several mediations for her clients offering insightful counsel to assist her clients in arriving at alternative resolutions.

Representative matters include:

- Successfully obtained summary judgment for a large institutional client in a Title VII retaliation suit in the Eastern District of Virginia
- Obtained several favorable jury verdicts on contract and business tort claims brought by corporate clients
- Drafted winning appellate briefs in both the Virginia Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals involving appeals of matters for which Helen also served as trial counsel
- Routinely draft comprehensive employee handbook for a technology-based company
- Routinely draft restrictive covenants for numerous government contractor clients

- Managed a multi-attorney team and all corresponding eDiscovery issues relating to a large document production of a Fortune 500 company engaged in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit
- Obtained dozens of agency dismissals of charges of discrimination brought by current and former employees against their employers
- Second-chaired five jury trials involving complex commercial disputes and business and employment torts in Virginia state courts
- Conducted the voir dire of three juries
- Taken and defended dozens of depositions, including expert and corporate depositions in complex commercial lawsuits and plaintiff depositions in Title VII cases
- Successfully first-chaired numerous bench trials involving motions for protective orders and landlord/tenant disputes in Virginia Circuit Courts
- Successfully drafted and argued numerous dispositive and discovery motions in Virginia state and federal courts, including disputes relating to business torts and restrictive covenants
- Assisted clients with internal investigations concerning allegations made by employees
- Obtained summary judgment for Verizon in a case alleging claims under the FLSA for failure to pay overtime and retaliatory discharge, as well as state law claims for breach of contract and wrongful discharge. Sustained judgment on appeal before the Fourth Circuit.

Publications

- "Virginia Supreme Court Gives Employers Enforcing Their Restrictive Covenants a Procedural Advantage," *Employment Law Watch*, October 2013
- "Virginia Human Resources Manual," *American Chamber of Commerce Resources*, August 2012 (co-author)
- "Model Policies and Forms for Virginia Employers," August 2012

Speaking Engagements

- 2014 American Institute of CPAs Expert Witness Skills Workshop, Washington, DC, September 2014
- Understanding a Tortious Interference Claim, George Mason University School of Law Inn of Court, January 2013

Education

George Mason University, Antonin Scalia Law School
JD, 2005

Loyola College
BA, 2000

Admissions & Credentials

Virginia

Maryland

Court Admissions

US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia

US District Court for the Western District of Virginia

US District Court for the District of Maryland

Rankings & Accolades

Chambers USA: Labor & Employment – Virginia (2024)

Virginia SuperLawyers: Rising Star (2013-2015)

Virginia Legal Elite: Young Lawyer (2015)

Angela A. Holland Memorial Award (2014)

Memberships & Affiliations

The Women's Center, General Counsel

Child and Family Network Centers, Member of the Board of Directors

Human Rights Commission to the Arlington County Board, Commissioner