



Shelly R. Pagac

Director

412-288-2264

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Practice Areas

Employment and Labor
Litigation

Shelly R. Pagac is a Director and the new Chair of the Employment and Labor Practice Group, bringing decades of experience in counseling, training, and defending employers nationwide. Shelly partners with businesses to develop proactive strategies that foster healthy workplaces while ensuring compliance with labor and employment regulations. With a distinguished career spanning over three decades, Shelly is a trusted advisor having successfully represented clients in state and federal courts across the United States.

Shelly has extensive experience handling a broad spectrum of employment law matters, including non-compete agreements, class actions under the Fair Labor Standards Act, Title VII discrimination claims, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Sarbanes-Oxley whistleblower cases. She has also defended employers against state tort claims such as defamation, wrongful discharge, and breach of contract. As a member of the Academy of Trial Lawyers of Western Pennsylvania, Shelly is recognized for her courtroom advocacy and trial success, having tried numerous cases to verdict, including a five-day sexual harassment trial in the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Shelly has become a go-to investigator for employers dealing with workplace misconduct, particularly in the wake of the #MeToo movement. She is also an approved mediator for the Federal District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, leveraging her deep understanding of employment law to help businesses resolve disputes efficiently.

Shelly is a dedicated leader in the legal community, serving as a Hearing Officer for the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania from 2020-2026 and playing an integral role in shaping employment law discussions as a Planning Committee member for the Allegheny County Bar Association Employment Law Seminar. Her commitment to professional excellence has earned her numerous accolades, including recognition in The Best Lawyers in America® for Employment Law and Litigation – Labor and Employment, as well as repeat selections as a Pennsylvania Super Lawyer.

Beyond her legal practice, Shelly is passionate about giving back. She has held leadership roles in various community organizations, including serving as the Secretary on the Board of Quantum Theatre and served as Co-Chair of the QBall twice, Pittsburgh Action Against Rape, and the Allegheny County Bar Association, where she has championed diversity and inclusion in the legal profession.

As the leader of Houston Harbaugh's Employment and Labor Practice Group, Shelly is dedicated to providing strategic counsel to employers, ensuring compliance, mitigating risk, and aggressively defending their interests when litigation arises.

Bar Admissions

- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- State of Illinois
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

Education

- The Catholic University of America, J.D.
- The Pennsylvania State University, B.A.

Awards/Recognition

- Susan B. Anthony Award
- Nora Barry Fischer Award
- Philip Werner Amram Award
- Top 50: 2015 Pittsburgh Super Lawyers
- Top 50: 2015 Women Pennsylvania Super Lawyers Best Lawyers
- Pennsylvania Super Lawyer®
- The Best Lawyers in America®

Professional Affiliations

- Academy of Trial Lawyers of Allegheny County
- Planning Committee member for the Allegheny County Bar Association Employment Law Seminar
- Secretary and Board Member of Quantum Theatre

Publications

- Pagac, Shelly R. and Jennifer R. Russell. "English Only Rules in the Workplace Still Subject to Scrutiny," Pennsylvania Law Weekly, March 6, 2012.
- "Wal-Mart Stores, INC. V. Betty Dukes, Et Al., The Supreme Court Steps in to Rein in Class Action Litigation," Upon Further Review, November 1, 2011.
- "The Faragher/Ellerth Affirmative Defense," Pennsylvania Bar Institute, February 2010.

Speaking Engagements

- "Making the Workplace Better for All," Allegheny County Housing Authority (McKees Rocks, PA), January 30, 2025
- "Pay Equity Laws," Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Labor and Employment Law Symposium (Pittsburgh, PA), November 14, 2024
- "Compartment Management of Student Support Services," Guest Speaker for the Doctorate of the Administrative and Policy Studies EdD (University of Pittsburgh), October 5, 2024
- "Homeruns and Strikeouts in Employment Law 2024," Professional Liability Attorney Network (PLAN) Regional Meeting (New York, New York), June 20, 2024
- "Accommodating Pregnancy in the Workplace: The New Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and its Interaction with the ADA and FMLA," Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Labor and Employment Law Symposium (Pittsburgh, PA), November 9, 2023
- "Weathering the Storm: How to Shelter Clients from Harassment Claims," Professional Liability Attorney Network (PLAN) Regional Meeting (Chicago, IL), July 20, 2023
- "How to Network Like a Pro," Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Women in the Law Division (Pittsburgh, PA), May 25, 2023
- "New Frontiers (And Some of the Same Ones) in Mediation," Professional Liability Attorney Network (PLAN) Regional Meeting (Chicago, IL), July 25, 2022

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- “Workplace Lessons Learned from COVID-19,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West 2021 (Webinar), November 17, 2021
- “The Impact of the #MeToo Movement on Employment Cases: Bogaski v. Allegheny County,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West 2019 (Pittsburgh, PA), November 20, 2019
- “Insurance Coverage and the #MeToo Movement,” RIMS Pittsburgh Chapter’s EPLI Emerging Claim Trends & Coverage Issues (Pittsburgh, PA), February 12, 2019
- “The Sequel – Harassment Investigations #whatsnext?” Pittsburgh Human Resources Association (PHRA) (Pittsburgh, PA), November 30, 2019
- “An Interactive Study of a Sexual Harassment Case,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West 2018 (Pittsburgh, PA), November 13, 2018
- “Responding to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) (Philadelphia, PA), April 23, 2018
- “Civil Trial Practice in Western Pennsylvania,” Academy of Trial Lawyers of Allegheny County (ATLAC) 19th Annual Symposium (Pittsburgh, PA), April 20, 2018
- “Workplace Investigations- Don’t Be the Next Headline,” Pittsburgh Human Resource Association’s (PHRA) Employment Law Day (Pittsburgh, PA), December 1, 2017
- “Early Neutral Evaluation: What Works, What Does Not Work,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West (Pittsburgh, PA), November 16, 2017
- “Issues Arising with Employers & Social Media,” Human Resources & Leadership Symposium’s 9th Annual Conference (Pittsburgh, PA), April 18, 2017
- “Drafting an Enforceable Non-Compete Agreement,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West (Pittsburgh, PA), November 17, 2016
- “Career and Leadership Planning,” Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) Commission on Women in the Profession (Bedford, PA), November 11, 2016
- “The Art of Achievement,” Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Women in the Law 4th Annual Women’s Legal Summit (Pittsburgh, PA), August 17, 2016
- “Employment Law Workshop for Non-Profits,” Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (Pittsburgh, PA), January 28, 2016
- “What You Should Be Considering When Using Social Networking Sites in the Hiring Process,” Human Resources Association of the Alleghenies (Johnstown, PA), November 4, 2015
- “Dealing with the Problem Employee,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) (Pittsburgh, PA), September 24, 2015
- “What Can We Learn About Mediation From the ‘Game of Thrones’,” Pittsburgh Human Resource Association (PHRA) (Pittsburgh, PA), September 9, 2015
- “The World of Employment Practices Claims: Sex, Lies & Religion. What’s Next?” Professional Liability Attorney Network (PLAN) Regional Meeting (Chicago, IL), July 29, 2015
- “Responding to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct: A Legal Update for Employers, Educators, and Health Care Providers,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) (Pittsburgh, PA), July 21, 2015
- “Pregnancy Discrimination in the Workplace,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI), July 10, 2015

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- “FMLA Updates,” 10th Annual Employment Seminar, Sponsored by the Erie County Human Relations
- Commission (Erie, PA), June 25, 2015
- “Reasonable Accommodation for Religious Reasons Webinar,” Pittsburgh Human Resource Association (PHRA), March 26, 2015
- “Ethically Speaking: Keeping Up With Social Media and Other Technology Impacting Your Practice (ETHICS),” Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) Midyear Meeting (Jamaica), January 2015
- “Reasonable Accommodations for Religious Reasons,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West, November 13, 2014
- “Employment Law Nightmares: What’s Keeping You Up at Night?” Professional Liability Attorney Network (PLAN) Regional Meeting (Hartford, CT), October 23, 2014
- “What You Should Be Considering When Using Social Networking Sites In The Hiring Process?,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Social Media: Do Employers “Like” What Their Employees Are Doing Online, August 29, 2014
- “Metadata Mysteries Unveiled - Nothing ‘Foren’-tured, Nothing Gained,” Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Federal Courts Section, Trial Lawyers, and FBA, January 24, 2014
- “Business Litigation in the Federal Courts,” Academy of Trial Lawyer of Allegheny County (ATLAC), December 2013
- “When Can an Employer Terminate an Employee for Comments Made on a Social Networking Site – Is Calling the Employee’s Supervisor a “Jerk” Enough?,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBA) Employment Law Institute West, November 2013
- “Dealing with the Problem Employee,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI), September 2013
- “Law Firm Economics,” Duquesne Law School, August 2013
- “Employment Law: Risk Management Survival Guide,” (Pittsburgh, PA), July 2012
- “Breakfast With The Judges,” Moderator, Allegheny County Bar Association’s (ACBA) 50th Golden Anniversary Bench-Bar Conference, June 2012
- “From Ho, Ho, Ho to No, No, No.” Western Pennsylvania Human Resource Association (PHRA), December 2012
- “Managers Under Fire: How to Evaluate and Discipline Employees in a Union or Non-Union Workplace,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s (PBI) Employment Law Institute West 2011, November 2011
- “What If I Were Managing Partner...,” Moderator, Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Bench-Bar Conference, June 2011
- “Employment Law Trends,” Chartis Claims Advisory Board (Pittsburgh, PA), June 2011
- “Avoiding Discovery Traps that Can Derail Your Case,” Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Bench-Bar Conference, June 2010
- “Managing Performance Issues,” Ohio Ambulance Medical Transportation Association Annual Preconference, June 2010
- “During Employment – Addressing the Problem,” Dealing With the Problem Employee, Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) Seminar, June 2010
- “Handling the Sexual Harassment Case,” Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) Seminar, February 2010
- “Pink Slips: The Impact of Reductions in Force on Diversity,” Allegheny County Bar Association (ACBA) Bench-Bar Conference, June 2008
- “How to Write and Implement Effective Personnel Manuals,” Automatic Data Processing Seminar (Pittsburgh, PA), June 2000

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- “Hiring and Firing,” Automatic Data Processing Seminar (Pittsburgh, PA), April 2000
- “Enforcing Covenants Not to Compete,” (Scottsdale, AZ), March 2000

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