

## Melissa J. Ackie

Associate

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## Focus Areas

Leaves of Absence and Disability Accommodation  
Investigations  
Discrimination and Harassment  
Litigation and Trials  
Policies, Procedures and Handbooks  
Workplace Policy Institute

## Overview

Melissa Jeanine Ackie is a trusted legal adviser to business owners, in-house counsel, and human resources professionals on a broad range of HR and compliance workplace concerns, including leave and accommodation, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, terminations, and wage and hour issues. As a former secondee for a multinational publicly traded corporation, she leverages her experience and insight to help clients effectively navigate employment-related risk while balancing business realities in an ever-changing legal landscape. She partners with employers of all sizes, including both public and private, nonprofit, and public sector.

Melissa regularly conducts internal workplace investigations for higher education institutions (including Title IX), public sector employers, and private employers related to allegations of misconduct, including discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation.

She also maintains an active litigation practice, advocating and defending clients in arbitrations, federal courts, and state courts throughout Texas against discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and wage and hour allegations in matters. Her recent representative experience includes:

- Obtaining a complete dismissal with prejudice under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6)
- Obtaining complete defense findings in federal bench trial concerning allegations of FMLA retaliation

- Obtaining multiple summary judgments on behalf of nationwide companies sued in various employment actions under Title VII and the ADEA, including claims of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation
- Obtaining multiple summary judgments for actions violating the statute of limitations
- Obtaining summary judgment on behalf of a nonprofit sued in a defamation action
- Obtaining sanctions against a plaintiff for filing a baseless action under Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 13. Ruling was affirmed on appeal by the Third Court of Appeals
- Obtaining dismissals in multiple Charges of Discrimination in state and federal agencies, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Texas Workforce Commission
- Negotiating favorable settlements through mediation and other informal methods on behalf of clients facing significant exposure

Melissa serves as a liaison for Littler's Workplace Policy Institute (WPI). She focuses on Texas state legislative and regulatory developments in employment and labor law, as well as municipal ordinances and regulation of the workplace. Melissa tracks relevant legislation, revises policies and protocols for compliance, and assists clients in understanding the potential impact of Texas legislation before and after it becomes law.

Before joining Littler, Melissa's practice primarily focused on representing individuals and companies in Texas state courts, federal courts, and arbitrations in a variety of civil litigation defense actions.

While in law school, Melissa served as a judicial intern for Federal Judge Melinda Harmon of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Houston Division, and represented the University of Texas School of Law at nationals in the Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition.

Melissa has been a certified mediator for the State of Texas since December 2011 and is a classically trained violist.

## Professional and Community Affiliations

- Pathfinder, Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, 2018
- Board Member, Austin Diaper Bank
- Board Member, Plan II Board of Visitors
- Fellow, Texas Bar Foundation
- Member, Austin Young Chamber
- Member, Austin Young Lawyers Association Leadership Academy, Class of 2022
- Member, Austin Black Lawyers Association

## Recognition

- Named, Ones to Watch, *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2022-2025

## **Education**

J.D., University of Texas School of Law, 2013

B.A., University of Texas, Austin, 2010, *Phi Beta Kappa*

## **Bar Admissions**

Texas

## **Courts**

U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit

U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas

U.S. District Court, Southern District of Texas

U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Texas

U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas

## **Publications & Press**

### **Texas District Court Declares State Preemption Law Unconstitutional. What Now?**

*Littler ASAP*

September 1, 2023

### **Texas Governor Signs Preemption Bill, CROWN Act and Other Bills**

*SHRM Online*

August 23, 2023

### **Texas Governor Signs Preemption Bill, CROWN Act, and Other Legislation into Law**

*Littler Insight*

August 11, 2023

### **Best Lawyers in America© 2022 Edition Honors More Than 240 Littler Lawyers**

*Littler Press Release*

August 19, 2021

### **Federal Court Strikes Down Dallas Paid Sick Leave Ordinance**

*Littler ASAP*

April 2, 2021

### **Court Finds Texas Minimum Wage Law Preempts San Antonio Paid Sick Leave Ordinance**

*Littler ASAP*

March 11, 2021

**The Uncertain Future of Texas Paid-Sick-Leave Ordinances**

*SHRM Online*

June 23, 2020

**Silence from on High: The Uncertain Future of Texas Paid Sick Leave Ordinances**

*Littler ASAP*

June 16, 2020

**Final Title IX Regulations Adopt Sweeping Changes for Handling Sexual Harassment Claims at Institutions of Higher Education**

*Littler Insight*

May 8, 2020

**The Open Texas Plan: A State and Local Update**

*Littler ASAP*

May 1, 2020

**Texas Stay Home Orders: A State and Local Update**

*Littler Insight*

April 9, 2020

**Dallas Paid Sick Leave Ordinance is Enjoined**

*Littler ASAP*

March 31, 2020

**Central Texas Counties and the Cities of Austin and San Antonio Ordered to Stay Safe at Home**

*Littler ASAP*

March 25, 2020

**Amendments to San Antonio's Paid Sick Leave Ordinance—and Related Developments Affecting the Lone Star State**

*Littler Insight*

November 1, 2019

**Littler Recognized by Leadership Council on Legal Diversity as a 2019 Top Performer and Selected for the 2019 Compass Award**

*Littler Press Release*

November 1, 2019

**Moving Targets: (Possible) Delays to Texas Paid Sick Leave Ordinances**

*Littler ASAP*

July 25, 2019

**Texas Paid Sick Leave Question of the Hour: What do Employers do Now?**

*Littler ASAP*

June 14, 2019

**Dallas Joins Austin and San Antonio in Mandating Paid Sick Leave in Texas**

*Littler Insight*

April 29, 2019

**Austin, Texas Earned Sick Time Ordinance on Life Support**

*Littler ASAP*

November 19, 2018

**New Workplace Battlefield: Paid Sick Leave**

*Houston Chronicle*

October 10, 2018

**The New Workplace Battleground: Paid Sick Leave in Texas**

*Texas Tribune TribTalk*

October 5, 2018

**Texas Two-Step: San Antonio Joins Austin in Mandating Paid Sick and Safe Leave; Then Court Enjoins Austin Law from Taking Effect During Appeal**

*Littler Insight*

August 21, 2018

**New Developments in Employment and Labor Law Under the Trump Administration, co-authored with Scott McDonald**

July 2017

## **Speaking Engagements**

**A New Era of Employment Risk: Student Athletes as Employees and Adverse Actions Under Muldrow**

The University of Texas System Legal Conference

September 27, 2024

**Leave and Accommodation in the Post-COVID Era**

CenTexSHRM, Belton, TX

September 11, 2024

**The Expanded Scope of Actionable Adverse Employment Actions Under Title VII**

Austin Bar Association, Labor and Employment Law Section, Austin, TX

September 10, 2024

**Lawfully Hiring The Best Candidates**

Client Training, San Antonio, TX  
August 29, 2024

**Conducting Lawful Investigations**

Client Training, Austin, TX  
November 28, 2023

**Workplace Investigations: The Dos, The Don'ts, and the What Have You Done**

CenTexSHRM, Belton, TX  
November 8, 2023

**FMLA Workshop For HR Professionals**

University of Texas at San Antonio Training, San Antonio, TX  
September 11, 2023

**Maintaining a Respectful Workplace**

Client Training, Austin, TX  
August 14, 2023

**Title IX Training**

University of Texas System Title IX Annual Training, Austin, TX  
August 2-3, 2023

**Littler Austin's 2022 Holiday Season Lunch and Learn**

Austin, TX  
December 9, 2022

**Employment Law Update: Trends and Developments in Leave and Accommodation, Wage and Hour, and Texas State and Local Laws**

2022 South Texas SHRM Annual Half Day Conference, Victoria, TX  
December 8, 2022

**A Leave and Benefits Medley: Dobbs, COVID, and Related Questions**

Austin Bar Association, Labor & Employment Law Section CLE Presentation, Austin, TX  
October 5, 2022

**Innovative Talk About Wage and Hour Laws**

2022 SHRM New Mexico State Conference, Albuquerque, NM  
April 11, 2022

**Littler Lawyers Answer Your Most Burning Labor and Employment Questions**

The Houstonian, Houston, TX

February 17, 2022

**Back to Work? How In-House Employment Counsel and Human Resources Professionals Can Help Organizations Assess Whether, When and How to Reopen for Business**

April 27, 2020

**Coming August 1, 2019: Preparing for the Texas Paid Sick Leave Wave**

July 17, 2019

**Employment Law Red Flags: How to Spot Them and How to Fix Them**

Hispanic Bar Association of Austin CLE Presentation, Austin, TX

August 2018

**CLI: Conducting Lawful Investigations**

Client Training, San Antonio, TX

July 2018

**Hospitality in the #MeToo Era: Shifting From Risk To Opportunity For A Better Work Environment**

Texas Hotel & Lodging Association Conference, Lost Pines, TX

June 2018

**Competency: Talent Management**

Client Training, Austin, TX

May 2018

**From Harvey Weinstein to... Who's Next? Preventing Harassment in the Workplace and What to Do When Claims are Made**

Austin, TX

April 5, 2018

**Respect in the Workplace**

Client Training, Austin, TX

March 2018

**Managing Within the Law**

Client Training, Austin, TX

February 2018

## **Books & Book Chapters**

- *Employment Discrimination Law Treatise*, Bloomberg BNA, Sixth Edition, Chapter Contributor, 2018