

RACHEL WENDT WISDOM

Member

New Orleans

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OVERVIEW

Rachel Wisdom practices in labor and employment law, complex litigation, and class action lawsuits. Her extensive experience includes defending public agencies and businesses against wage penalty, employment civil rights, retaliatory discharge, and other claims in both federal and state courts. Rachel regularly advises clients on employment practices and policies, agreements, and related matters.

One of her most notable cases includes defending the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) against a class action lawsuit that sought to stop HANO from tearing down storm damaged public housing projects after Hurricane Katrina to build mixed-income housing.

Rachel also provides pro-bono legal services for the homeless through Homeless Experience Legal Protection (H.E.L.P.).

REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

- Defended wage penalty, FLSA, FMLA, ERISA, ADA, retaliatory discharge, employment civil rights, as well as race, sex, and age discrimination claims in federal and state courts for public agencies as well as hotels, manufacturers, a cable installation company, a railroad, an insurance company, and professional services companies.
- Successfully prosecuted and defended many claims for breach of employment contracts, including claims to enforce non-competition, anti-raiding, and confidentiality clauses.
- Represented manufacturing defendants in workplace exposure claims.
- Represented public agencies in numerous employee termination appeals to the Louisiana Civil Service Commission and represented management in union arbitration proceedings.
- Advises numerous clients regarding employment practices and policies, agreements, terminations, and related compensation issues.
- Represented a public housing agency, insurance companies, and other business defendants in commercial and other class action proceedings, and has successfully defended against class certification. *E.g., Anderson v. U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development*, 554 F.3d 525 (5th Cir. 2008).
- Obtained a summary judgment in favor of a Louisiana industrial plant, dismissing damages claims in excess of \$50,000,000.

PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC ACTIVITIES

- Board of Directors of Advocates for Arts-Based Education, a nonprofit corporation that operates the Lusher Charter Schools in New Orleans, 2005 – present.

PRACTICE AREAS

Employment

Class and Mass Action Litigation

Business Litigation

BAR ADMISSIONS

Louisiana Federal and State Courts

EDUCATION

Tulane University Law School, J.D.,
magna cum laude, 1990

- Order of the Coif
- Notes and Comments Editor, *Tulane Law Review*, 1989-90

Tulane University, *magna cum laude*,
with departmental honors, 1984

- Phi Beta Kappa

L'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris,
1982-83

CLERKSHIPS

Judicial law clerk to the Honorable
Martin L.C. Feldman, U.S. District
Court, 1990-91.

- Executive Council of the Louisiana State Bar Association Labor & Employment Section 2006 – 2014.
- Board of Advisors for Ozanam Inn, a shelter and service provider for the homeless, 2007 – 2012.
- President of the Board of Directors of Rebuilding Our Community, Inc., a nonprofit organization working to assist with rebuilding efforts in New Orleans after Katrina, 2007 – 2009.
- Board Member and Secretary of New Orleans Computer Access Program, a charitable organization that provided personal computers and training to disadvantaged New Orleans Public School first grade students and their parents, 2000 – 2005.
- Judge *pro tempore* for the First City Court of Orleans Parish on multiple occasions from 1999 – 2009.
- Litigation Counsel of America Fellow.

TEACHING POSITIONS

- Rachel was an Adjunct Professor of Law at Tulane University Law School teaching Negotiation & Mediation Advocacy from 2011 to 2022.

HONORS & AWARDS

- American Bar Foundation Fellow.
- *Benchmark Litigation* "Future Star" 2020.
- *Best Lawyers in America* 2008 – 2024.
- Chambers and Partners 2013 – 2023.
- *Louisiana Super Lawyers* 2009 – 2023.
 - Top 50 Louisiana Lawyers 2023.
 - Top 25 Women Lawyers in Louisiana 2011, 2012, 2018, 2022, and 2023.
 - Top 50 New Orleans Lawyers 2023.
- *New Orleans Magazine* "Top Lawyer" 2012 – 2022.
- *New Orleans CityBusiness* 2010, 2021, and 2023 Leadership in Law honoree.
- *New Orleans CityBusiness* Woman of the Year 2008.

PRESENTATIONS

"LGBT Issues in Labor & Employment," LSBA Specialty Bar Conference, August 2021.

"Workplace Monitoring and Information Security," NBI Seminar, November 2019.

"Independent Contractor or Employee?," Fund 17 Presentation, May 2019.

"Employment Basics," New Orleans BioInnovation Center, September 2017.

"Labor and Employment Law for Business Attorneys," National Business Institute Seminar, June 2017.

"Beyond the Bathrooms: A Focus on Transgender Rights," New Orleans Bar Association, June 2016.

"The Impact of Windsor and Obergefell on Employee Rights/Employer Obligations and Emerging LGBT Issues in the Louisiana Workplace," Current Developments in Labor & Employment Law CLE program, March 2016.