

KAREN S. ELLIOTT

Partner / Richmond

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Karen Elliott is the founding partner of FordHarrison's Richmond office and she concentrates her legal practice on the representation of management clients in workplace disputes.

Karen strives to provide her clients straightforward legal advice to help them craft effective business solutions to human resources challenges. She represents organizations of all sizes, from start-ups to companies listed in the Fortune 500. Karen has significant experience in a host of industries including nursing homes, physician practices, and health and rehabilitation centers, as well as travel and entertainment, fast food, and retail. Karen is often hired to serve as an independent investigator for employers facing complex and serious discrimination claims.

Karen's primary goal in advising her clients is to prevent litigation before it arises out of one of the dozens of federal employment law statutes. She routinely advises her clients on personnel policies, recordkeeping, and other preventative measures that can help them avoid running afoul of laws governing the workplace including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), to name just a few. Sometimes litigation simply cannot be avoided and Karen is no stranger to the courtroom. When a client is faced with a legal claim or agency charge, Karen capitalizes on her extensive experience handling cases before both federal and state courts and appearing on behalf of clients in state and federal agency proceedings.

Karen knows firsthand about the difficult employment issues that routinely challenge businesses. While serving as President for a not-for-profit organization, she had to act on her own legal advice when the organization's business office staff walked out unexpectedly. She knows from experience that the legal answer to the problem may not always be the preferred solution for the business, and she is adept in walking clients through the merits of adhering to the best course of action within the legal framework.

EDUCATION

- » University of Virginia School of Law (J.D., 1986)
- » George Washington University (B.A., *with distinction*)

BAR ADMISSIONS

- » Virginia

COURT ADMISSIONS

- » U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
- » U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia
- » U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia
- » U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia
- » U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Virginia

Representative Experience

- » Author, amicus brief successfully supporting at-will employment decision in Virginia on behalf of The Society of Human Resource Management, the Virginia Society for Human Resource Management State Council, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Assisted Living Association, Virginia Retail Merchants Association, and the Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association.
- » Independent investigator for complex discrimination claims.
- » Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Position Statement investigation, defense development, and statement preparation regarding employment law claims across a wide variety of industries including health care, hospitality, construction, travel, and retail industries. National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Position Statement investigation, defense development, and statement preparation against Unfair Labor Practice Charges across a variety of industries, including construction and fast food.
- » Federal Court defense of employment discrimination claims, including Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave Act, Title VII, 42 USC§1981, retaliation, and whistleblower claims, across a wide variety of industries.
- » Unemployment defense before the Virginia Unemployment Commission. FLSA single plaintiff and class action defense.
- » FLSA classification advice. Drafting employment contracts, independent contractor agreements, handbooks, drug policies.

Honors & Awards

- » 2023 Class of Influential Women of Law, *Virginia Lawyers Weekly*
- » Selected to serve on the 2022 Overtime Work Group; appointed by Virginia Secretary of Labor, G. Bryan Slater
- » *The Best Lawyers in America*: Employment Law – Management; Labor Law – Management (2013-2024)
- » "Virginia Super Lawyers," *Super Lawyers* magazine (2012-2019)
- » "Legal Elite" for Labor and Employment, *Virginia Business* magazine (2004-2023)
- » AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review rating, Martindale-Hubbell

Memberships

- » Virginia Chamber of Commerce
 - » Labor and Employment Subcommittee Chair, under the Business Climate Industry Council (2014-present)
 - » Committee on Management Relations and Business Task Force
- » Blueprint Virginia 2030 Advisory Council Member
- » Society of Human Resources Management, Member (2001 – present)
- » ACG Richmond, Inc., Former Board of Directors and LEAD Committee Chair (Leadership Education and Development)
- » Richmond Society for Human Resource Management, Legislative Affairs Director (two year terms, 2019-2021; 2021-2023)
- » City of Richmond Bar Association, Former Board Member
- » Society of Human Resources State Council, Former Legislative Director
- » Metropolitan Richmond Women's Bar Association, Past President
- » Fox Hall Home Owners Association, Past President (2008-2009)
- » Children's Home Society of Virginia, Former Board Member (1993 – 2006)
- » NOVA of Virginia Aquatics, Inc., Past President (2006 – 2007)

News & Insights

- » August 17, 2023 - Richmond-Based FordHarrison Attorneys Listed in the 2024 Best Lawyers in America
- » July 07, 2023 - "Workers who organized at Mom's Siam restaurant out of jobs," Richmond Times-Dispatch
- » June 14, 2023 - "Atlanta-based law firm expands into Richmond, lures two local attorneys," Richmond BizSense
- » June 09, 2023 - "FordHarrison Adds Richmond Office Led By Ex-Eckert Attys," Law360 Pulse
- » June 06, 2023 - Virginia Employment Law Update: Important Changes Effective July 1, 2023

Offices

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