LEILA HENDERSON GARY

COUNSEL • DALLAS/FORT WORTH

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972-441-4527

Leila draws upon her prior experience as a public school teacher and charter school administrator in her work defending and advising clients. Leila's attention to detail and responsiveness ensures that her clients receive optimal guidance from an attorney who truly understands the challenges that public and private educational institutions face each day.

Leila is Counsel in the Thompson & Horton Dallas and Fort Worth offices. She focuses her practice on the representation of public entities, including public and private schools, colleges, and universities. She has experience litigating complex matters in state and federal court. Prior to joining T&H, Leila was Assistant General Counsel for the second largest public school district in Texas, where her practice was largely focused on employment matters, grievances, state and federal litigation, policy development, and providing daily legal counsel on any number of issues. Leila was also lead in-house counsel for the district in the successful development, implementation and defense of the district's landmark teacher appraisal system. Leila's past experience also includes a wide range of insurance defense and insurance coverage litigation.

Before becoming an attorney, Leila taught in public schools as a history teacher and also worked in administration for a leading national charter school network, and brings her insight as an educator to her practice as a public and education law attorney.

SELECTED CLIENT REPRESENTATIONS

Lead in-house counsel for large urban school district's policy development, implementation and defense of landmark teacher evaluation and merit pay system.

Obtained directed verdict in federal court for a large public school district in a racial discrimination lawsuit

Successfully defended large public school district in hundreds of employee grievances on a variety of matters ranging from termination appeals to TEI challenges

REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS, & SPEECHES

Thompson & Horton Webinar, March 2023: What You Don't Know Might Hurt You: Surviving an OCR or DOJ Civil Rights Complaint

National Association of School Boards, April 2022: School and the Culture Wars: Discrimination, Free Speech, and Discipline

Region X, December 2022: The Fourth Amendment, Student Searches, and School Safety

Region X, November 2021: Board Policy Bootcamp for HR Administrators

Region XI Education Service Center HR Summit, Professional Standards of Conduct and the Use of Social Media

Region X Education Service Center HR Summit, Conducting Effective Investigations of Reported Employee Misconduct

PRACTICE AREAS

Constitutional Law
Employment Law
General Counsel / Board Counsel
Government Relations & Public Policy
Litigation
Private/Independent Schools
Special Investigations
Title IX & Sexual Harassment
Training & Compliance

EDUCATION

J.D., Southern Methodist University, Dedman School of Law 2008 (Student Attorney, Consumer Advocacy Clinic; President, SMU Women in Law; Comparative Legal Studies UK/EU, SMU at Oxford University)

M.Ed., University of Texas at Austin, 2001 (Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society)

B.A., University of Rochester, 1998 (Dean's List)

LICENSING & COURT ADMISSIONS

Licensed in the state of Texas

U.S. District Court for the Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern Districts of Texas

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

MEMBERSHIPS & RECOGNITIONS

Texas Super Lawyers Rising Star, 2014

Patrick E. Higginbotham Inn of Court, Associate Member, 2011

The Barristers, SMU Dedman School of Law

Texas Association of School Boards – Council of School Attorneys

State Bar of Texas – School Law Section, Labor and Employment Section

Vestry, Episcopal Church of the Incarnation

Sustainer, Junior League of Dallas

Thompson & Horton LLP

ATTORNEYS | COUNSELORS