

STEPHANIE A. HAMM

PARTNER • HOUSTON

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Stephanie's interest in the law began at a very early age after watching countless episodes of her mother's favorite legal dramas after pre-school. Stephanie put those television courtroom drama skills to good use in law school, where she earned a spot as a varsity moot court advocate with one of the nation's top advocacy programs, and won several brief-writing and best speaker awards. After law school, Stephanie began representing clients in complex commercial litigation, but quickly discovered an interest in employment, civil rights, and constitutional law. Stephanie now uses her advocacy skills to represent school districts, colleges, and other governmental entities in a wide range of disputes in both state and federal court.

Stephanie is a litigation partner in Thompson & Horton's Houston office. She primarily focuses on employee and student civil rights cases involving claims of discrimination, retaliation, harassment, excessive force, and violations of the constitutional rights to free speech, due process, and equal protection. Stephanie's extensive experience includes litigating cases arising under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, including claimed violations of the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA); the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA); and Chapter 21 of the Texas Labor Code. Stephanie also represents clients in administrative hearings before the State Office of Administrative Hearings, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Workforce Commission, including termination and non-renewal hearings under Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code.

In addition to her litigation practice, Stephanie also counsels clients on employment practices and disputes, advises school districts and community colleges on legal issues relating to their police departments, assists human resources personnel with leave of absence and accommodation requests, reviews and negotiates interlocal agreements, assists clients with internal and external audits and investigations, participates in EEOC investigations and mediations, represents clients in internal grievance hearings, advises school boards on legal issues relating to employee and student complaints, advises clients on Public Information Act and Open Meetings Act issues, and conducts trainings for clients on Title IX, Title VII, ADA, and other legal issues.

Prior to joining Thompson & Horton, Stephanie practiced labor and employment law, general commercial litigation, white collar criminal defense, and qui tam litigation under the False Claims Act. While attending South Texas College of Law Houston, Stephanie served as a varsity moot court advocate and a member of South Texas Law Review. She also interned with United States District Judge David Hittner with the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

SELECTED CLIENT REPRESENTATIONS

Obtained a federal jury verdict in favor of a school district in a Title IX case involving allegations of student-on-student sexual assault

Successfully defended a school district and its employee against claims of excessive student discipline and disability discrimination in *T.O. v. Fort Bend Independent School District*, 2 F.4th 407 (5th Cir. 2021), cert. denied, 142 S. Ct. 2811 (2022)

Obtained summary judgment in favor of school district on former student's free speech and due process claims brought under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, and also obtained summary judgment on behalf of school district employees based on qualified immunity

PRACTICE AREAS

Constitutional Law
Employment Law
General Counsel
Higher Education
Litigation
Special Investigations
Student Issues
Training & Compliance
Title IX & Sexual Harassment

EDUCATION

J.D., magna cum laude, South Texas College of Law Houston, 2009

B.A., summa cum laude, University of Saint Thomas, 2006

LICENSING & COURT ADMISSIONS

Licensed in the state of Texas

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

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

MEMBERSHIPS & RECOGNITIONS

Education Law Association

Texas Association of School Boards – Council of School Attorneys

Texas Super Lawyers, Schools & Education, 2022

Texas Rising Star, Schools & Education, 2020–2022

Texas Rising Star, Employment Litigation (Defense), 2019

Texas Rising Star, Employment Litigation (Plaintiff), 2017–2018

State Bar of Texas: School Law, Labor & Employment, and Litigation Sections

**Thompson
& Horton** LLP

ATTORNEYS | COUNSELORS

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SELECTED CLIENT REPRESENTATIONS (CONTINUED)

Obtained dismissal of breach of contract and declaratory judgment claims brought by former student relating to his student records and disciplinary history

Obtained summary judgment in favor of large community college system on student's ADA failure-to-accommodate claim

Obtained summary judgment in favor of community college on former employee's Title VII race discrimination and retaliation claims

Obtained summary judgment in favor of school district on student's Title IX claims arising from an alleged student-on-student sexual assault

Successfully defended the dismissal of constitutional and wrongful death claims asserted against school district police officers on appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

Argued to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in Title IX appeal after successfully obtaining summary judgment on behalf of school district

Successfully represented both community college and school district police departments in administrative hearings relating to former police officers' discharge designations, resulting in denial of police officers' F5 appeals

REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS, & SPEECHES

"Tinkering Around in a Post-Mahanoy World: An Update on Student Free Speech Cases", COSA School Law Seminar (April 2023)

"How is this Reasonable? Answers to Common Leave and Accommodation Questions in the Never-Ending COVID Era," Region 4 ESC Critical Legal Issues Seminar (September 2022)

"The New(ish) Era of Title IX: The K-12 Title IX Coordinator," Splendora ISD (July 2022)

"We're All in this [Lawsuit] Together? How the New Sexual Harassment Laws in Texas Drastically Expand Liability for Both Employers and Employees," Thompson & Horton Webinar (February 2022)

"Free Speech: When Does Free Speech Become Hate Speech?" co-presenter with Chris Gilbert, Legal Issues for Texas School Administrators, University of St. Thomas