

MERRI SCHNEIDER-VOGEL

PARTNER • HOUSTON

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713-554-6749



As a former teacher, Merri has a deep connection with and commitment to the educators she advises every day. Merri's passion for her clients is evidenced by her responsiveness and willingness to put their interests first, whether in the courtroom, a board room, or the office.

Merri, a founding partner of Thompson & Horton, has counseled clients for more than thirty years with a focus on avoiding future legal problems and minimizing legal risks while helping to achieve the client's objectives. Merri is highly regarded for her in-depth training in areas related to personnel, students, governance, and open government. She also investigates matters involving employees and students in order to advise clients as they make important and difficult decisions.

When legal disputes do arise, Merri effectively advocates for her clients in courtroom and administrative proceedings in a variety of areas including employment law, disability law, elections, and student matters. Merri's clients include administrators, general counsels, and boards of public, private, and charter schools, community colleges and other governmental entities. Whether the client is a large public school system with more than 200,000 students or a small single campus charter school, Merri routinely advises on legal issues that are often resolved in a single phone call as well as complex matters that are of utmost consequence to the client. Merri has conducted successful multi-day trainings for all administrators in one of the largest school districts in Texas; hundreds of administrative hearings involving teacher grievances, terminations, and non-renewals as well as student special education and discipline matters; and large-scale investigations for numerous schools and other government entities.

SELECTED CLIENT REPRESENTATIONS

Successfully represented district in special education matter, handling entire process from initial ARD committee meeting to the due process hearing before TEA. Currently handling the resulting litigation in federal district court

Obtained summary judgement on Title IX claim against school district which was affirmed by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals

Handled a major reduction in force for a large school district from start to finish including initial recommendations to obtaining successful outcomes in the resulting nonrenewal hearings and appeals to TEA

Conducted sensitive investigation of discrimination alleged by female employee against school district

Conducted major investigation into allegations of irregularities on standardized test

Lead a team in conducting outside investigation into systematic sex discrimination alleged by female firefighters employed by municipality

REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATIONS & SPEECHES

"Select Personnel Challenges and Practical Solutions", Region 4 Back to School Seminar

"Expect the Best, Prepare for the Worst: Positioning Yourself for Success in Due Process Challenges" Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education

PRACTICE AREAS

Employment Law
General Counsel / Board Counsel
Litigation
Special Investigations
Training & Compliance

EDUCATION

J.D., University of South Carolina School of Law, 1985

B.S., with honors, State University of New York College at Oneonta, 1977

LICENSING & COURT ADMISSIONS

Licensed in the state of Texas

U.S. Supreme Court

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

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

MEMBERSHIPS & RECOGNITIONS

Texas Super Lawyer, Schools and Education, 2006 – 2015, 2019

State Bar of Texas, School Law Section, Past Chair

Texas Council of School Attorneys, Executive Committee 2007-2012

Chair, Texas Council of School Attorneys, 2011-2012

National School Board Association, Council of School Attorneys

Education Law Association

Texas Association of Community College Attorneys

**Thompson
& Horton** LLP

ATTORNEYS | COUNSELORS

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REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTATIONS & SPEECHES (CONTINUED)

“Effective Documentation for Employee Improvement and Separation”, Texas School Administrators

“In Case of Emergency: A Legal Toolkit for Disaster Preparedness”, 33rd Annual School Law Conference

“Addressing Challenging Behavior of Students with Disabilities: Legal Guidance and Practical Solutions”, TCASE Great Ideas

“Nuts and Bolts of Texas Open Meetings Act, Public Information Act, and Conflict of Interest Laws”, Superintendents’ Secretaries’ Seminar

“Lessons Learned from Recent Special Education Cases”, GCASE Fall Forum

“Promoting Civility and Professionalism in Schools, 32nd Annual School Law Conference

“Disciplining Employees for Physical Altercations with Students”, TASA/TASB Convention

“Implementing a Legally Defensible Employee Drug Testing Policy” TASA/TASB Convention