

## Jessica L. Ritter

Partner

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Hartford

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Jessica Ritter is chair of Shipman's School Law Practice Group, and a member (and former co-chair) of the firm's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee. Jessica represents schools in a broad range of student, school governance and employment matters. In the labor and employment arena, she regularly negotiates certified and non-certified collective bargaining agreements on behalf of public boards of education and advocates for public schools in arbitrations and in a wide variety of administrative proceedings before various state agencies. She also advises public and independent schools on student conduct issues, school policies, labor disputes and employment litigation arising in the education context.

Jessica understands the complex, overlapping demands facing educators, school boards and administrative leadership. As a result of her longstanding client relationships, she has developed extensive institutional knowledge and provides continuity as school leadership changes over time. She uses this history and lessons learned to help clients adapt and respond proactively to rapidly developing legal and regulatory issues, including the impact of COVID-19 and vaccination availability on the application of US Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Department of Education, and related federal and state requirements; National Collegiate Athletic Administration (NCAA) eligibility; and closing the achievement gap.

When allegations of impropriety or potential wrongdoing arise, such as sexual harassment, violations of workplace health and safety standards, employment discrimination, student, staff and teacher discipline, and other workplace disputes, Jessica regularly conducts internal investigations to help identify and clarify the facts on the ground and enable school leadership to make effective decisions. She also represents school districts and educational institutions in compliance with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

Jessica comes from a family with a long history of public service, a commitment she has shared at every stage of her career. Before attending law school, she worked for the Massachusetts House of Representatives Ways & Means Committee, where she reviewed and analyzed budgets of Massachusetts' educational state agencies and drafted recommendations on legislation to the Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee. She also served as a volunteer with AmeriCorps in the greater Boston area.

Prior to joining Shipman, Jessica represented school clients in Connecticut and Massachusetts with a primary focus in education, civil litigation, and labor and employment matters.

## **Distinctions**

- Listed in The Best Lawyers in America®: *Education Law* (2023-2026); *Employment Law - Management* (2021-2026)
- Listed as a Connecticut Super Lawyer®: *Schools & Education* (2024)
- Listed as a Connecticut Super Lawyer Rising Star®: *Schools & Education* (2014-2019)
- 40 Under Forty, *Hartford Business Journal* (2017)

## **Teaching Positions**

- University of Connecticut: Adjunct Professor, Neag School of Education

## **Professional Affiliations**

- Connecticut Bar Association
- Connecticut School Attorneys Council: President (2013)
- Oliver Ellsworth American Inn of Court

## **Credentials**

### *Education*

- University of Connecticut School of Law, J.D., 2006
- Trinity College, B.A., 2001

### *Bar Admissions*

- Massachusetts, 2006
- Connecticut, 2007

### *Court Admissions*

- U.S. District Court, District of CT
- U.S. District Court, District of MA