

Sarah A. Westby

Partner

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Hartford

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Sarah is Chair of Shipman's Cannabis Team and a partner in our Employment and Labor Practice Group. Sarah takes a 360-degree, results-driven approach to client service, considering her clients' budget, business values, risk appetite, reputation, and concerns for precedent-setting action.

Sarah counsels cannabis and hemp businesses across all parts of the supply chain. She has assisted established and start-up companies with business formation, preparing cannabis business applications, compliance and management of the cannabis business, and creating social equity partnerships. Sarah brings her substantial litigation and counseling experience to bear in assisting clients with license denials, business-related disputes, employment matters and contracts. She has successfully assisted clients with complex changes in ownership of cannabis businesses in compliance with state law and regulations, and regularly liaises with state regulators. She values collaborative work in all types of settings ranging from small teams to large "virtual" law firms.

Beyond her cannabis practice, Sarah regularly represents clients across all industries on a broad array of employment and personnel matters, including accommodations and leaves of absence, complaints of discrimination and harassment, compensation, termination, severance, and workplace safety, with a focus on risk mitigation and optimizing business operations. She also has experience counseling organizations through state and federal Department of Labor investigations pertaining to wage and hour and exempt classification issues, and regularly conducts workplace investigations into discrimination and harassment complaints. While she is always prepared to try a case, Sarah recognizes that early dispute resolution is often in the best interests of her clients. When litigation is necessary, Sarah avidly pursues her clients' interests in state and federal court, before administrative agencies such as the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, and through

alternate dispute resolution. She has a proven track record of success obtaining dismissal on summary judgment and through appeals.

Sarah's practice also includes representing clients pro bono in immigration, domestic violence, and child protection cases through partnerships with Lawyers for Children America, the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the American Civil Liberties Union. She has assisted clients with applications for asylum in the United States and civil restraining orders in Connecticut.

Outside of Sarah's legal practice, she serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors for Simply Smiles, Inc., a not-for-profit organization that builds villages of foster homes in Native communities. She helped secure a land lease for a new village on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation in South Dakota, where Simply Smiles built a first-of-its-kind intentional community of foster families for Native children. Significantly, Sarah created an employment structure to professionalize the organization's foster parenting program by crafting complex, unique job descriptions, employment agreements, and housing agreements, to address the specific needs of Native foster children and the demands of living on the Reservation, in compliance with state, federal, and tribal law.

Distinctions

- Listed as a Connecticut Super Lawyer Rising Star®: *Employment Litigation: Defense* (2023-2024); *Employment Litigation* (2021-2022); *Personal Injury - Products: Defense* (2018-2020)
- Connecticut Cannabis Chamber of Commerce - Attorney of the Year (2023)
- New Leader in the Law, *Connecticut Law Tribune* (2022)
- *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*, Executive Board
- CALI Excellence Awards: Trial Advocacy; International Business Transactions
- University of Iowa 2010 Trandafir International Business Writing Competition Award
- International Economic Law Graduate Award
- Phi Beta Kappa - Alpha Chapter of Delaware

Professional Affiliations

- DRI, The Voice of the Defense Bar: Young Lawyers Committee; Women in the Law Committee; Medical Liability and Healthcare Law Committee; Cannabis Law Committee
- American Bar Association: Product Liability Section
- Connecticut Bar Association: Litigation Section
- New York City Bar Association
- New York State Bar Association

Community Involvement

- Simply Smiles, Inc., Board Secretary (2016-2018), Vice Chairman of the Board (2019-present)
- Connecticut Women's Council, Member
- Fred D. Wish School Volunteer Tutor Program
- Leadership Greater Hartford, Quest Class 2018; Hartford Summer Youth Employment Initiative, Member

Credentials

Education

- Brooklyn Law School, J.D., 2011, *cum laude*
- University of Delaware, 2008, *magna cum laude*

Bar Admissions

- Connecticut
- New York

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court, Southern District of NY
- U.S. District Court, District of CT
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of NY
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit