

## Hanna Norvell

Partner

Houston

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Hanna provides practical and strategic advice, whether negotiating an executive entry/exit, protecting the company's trade secrets/talent, or advising on sensitive investigations and compliance issues. Her experience helps employers in developing processes and documentation to prevent and mitigate risks.

### OVERVIEW

Board certified in Labor and Employment Law, Hanna advises and litigates for employers in matters regarding executives, employees, or contractors, particularly regarding executive agreements, trade secret and restrictive covenant matters, and board or workplace investigations. Hanna also represents businesses in matters regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities, including due diligence for deals, defending claims, and proactive compliance for every type of building or feature, such as services and communications. Hanna handles multifamily housing Fair Housing compliance issues, including design and construction, discrimination, reasonable accommodations and modifications, and defends claims of FHA violations.

Hanna's experience includes working with entities of various sizes and in every stage of development, from private-equity or family office-backed startups or new acquisitions to well-established global companies, in various industries, including energy, private equity, or other investment companies, software, financial services, real estate, telecommunications, food and beverage, manufacturing, biotechnology, health care, and hospitality.

Hanna has experience in drafting, enforcing, and litigating executive and other employment agreements, separation or severance agreements, executive compensation and benefits agreements, incentive, retention and severance plans, nondisclosure, nondisparagement, noncompetition, nonsolicitation, and nonhire agreements.

Hanna litigates claims regarding tortious interference, unfair competition, misappropriation of trade secrets and confidential information, breach of employment agreement or other contract, defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress, retaliation, harassment, discrimination and whistleblower claims, wages and hours (Fair Labor Standards Act and other overtime and minimum wage laws), as well as public policy or contract-based claims, and any employment agency audits and enforcement actions.

Employers call on Hanna for practical advice and counsel regarding employment issues, decisions, and risks. This includes best practices and training and otherwise handling: trade secret protection and restrictive covenant drafting; internal and external investigations and audits; compliance reviews of diversity (DEI) or other employment programs; layoff and restructuring programs (including WARN Act), furloughs, voluntary separations or retirement programs; handling due diligence and representations regarding employment issues in mergers and acquisitions;

classification issues including employees and contractors, as well as joint employment (co-employment) with staffing, or affiliated companies; disability, religious, gender, and pregnancy accommodations, and interactive process; leaves of absence (including FMLA, ADA and workers compensation); ethics, conflicts of interest, and related compliance training; workplace violence or misconduct; incentive compensation, bonus, and commission programs; background checks, applicant testing, artificial intelligence, and other hiring screens and processes; and multistate employer handbooks and policies and agreements.

## REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

- Guided boards of directors in expeditiously resolving executive terminations and resulting breach of contract claims through pre-lawsuit negotiations and mediation in the health care, biotech, and oilfield services industries.
- Asserted counter-claims regarding breaches of fiduciary duty and theft of trade secrets and obtained a voluntarily dismissal of an executive claim of an alleged breach of a severance agreement.
- Conducted a multistate internal investigation for a software company concerning the appropriate use of confidential and trade secret information belonging to that company, as well as that of other companies.
- Defended through trial a high-profile fraud and breach of contract claim brought against an energy company by a former executive, including obtaining an early dismissal of his whistleblower claim.
- Defended and obtained a dismissal for an oilfield services company in a U.S. Department of Labor investigation involving alleged misclassification of independent contractors.
- Audited sites in several states for a real estate development buyer during the transactional diligence period to identify accessibility issues under the ADA and local laws and to negotiate price credit for the cost of correcting the identified issues.
- For a national hotel group, negotiated the resolution of private claimant ADA class action claims regarding accessible features at hundreds of sites.
- Obtained a dismissal with no penalty of a multisite ADA Department of Justice investigation/claim regarding accessible parking issues.

## AWARDS

- *Best Lawyers in America*®: Employment Law-Management and Litigation-Labor & Employment (2013-2026)
- *Super Lawyers*® Texas Rising Star, Employment & Labor and Employment Litigation: Defense (2004-2009, 2011)

## TOP AREAS OF FOCUS

- Labor + Employment

## ALL AREAS OF FOCUS

- Accessible Facilities and Services (ADA Titles II and III)
- Artificial Intelligence
- Corporate Espionage Response Team
- Employment Counseling
- Energy
- Fair Housing Compliance + Defense
- Financial Services
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### Government Claims + Investigations

- Health Care + Life Sciences
- Independent Contractor Misclassification + Compliance
- Insurance + Reinsurance
- Labor + Employment
- Labor + Employment Litigation + Dispute Resolution
- Noncompete + Trade Secrets
- OSHA + Workplace Safety
- Private Equity
- Wage + Hour Matters

## **PROFESSIONAL/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- Member, State Bar of Texas
- Member, Houston Bar Association Labor and Employment Section
- Former council member, Houston Bar Association, Labor & Employment Section
- Former member, Houston Bar Association Gender Initiative Task Force
- Former member, Women's Energy Network
- Former board member, Avondale House
- Former board member, Lighthouse of Houston
- Member, First Presbyterian Church, Houston

## **EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS**

### **EDUCATION**

- Vanderbilt University Law School, J.D., 1996
- Transylvania University, B.A., *magna cum laude*, 1993

### **BAR ADMISSIONS**

- Texas

### **COURT ADMISSIONS**

- U.S. District Court, Southern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Texas
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit

## **SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**

- Moderator, "Legal Issues Employers Face in 2024: What You Need to Know," Locke Lord, February 21, 2024.
- Moderator, "Legal Issues Employers Face in 2023: What You Need to Know," Locke Lord, February 15, 2023.

- Moderator, “Employer Update Breakfast Briefing,” Locke Lord, February 2, 2022.
- Moderator, “What Employers Need to Know in 2020: Legal Issues Employers Face in the New Year,” Locke Lord, February 27, 2020.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- Co-author, “Key Employer Updates for 2024/2025 – Part Three: State Law Trends for Restrictive Covenant Agreements,” Locke Lord, October 2024.
- Co-author, “Key Employer Updates for 2024/2025 – Part Two: Employee Handbooks,” Locke Lord, September 24, 2024.
- Co-author, “Key Employer Updates for 2024/2025 – Part One in This Series: Offer Letters and Job Descriptions,” Locke Lord, September 10, 2024.
- Co-author, “Employment Law in the Wake of Dobbs,” Locke Lord QuickStudy, July 26, 2022.
- Co-author, “DOJ March 2022 Guidance on Website Accessibility,” Locke Lord QuickStudy, March 28, 2022.
- Co-author, “EEOC Releases Updated Vaccination Guidance for Employers,” Locke Lord QuickStudy, June 4, 2021.
- Co-author, “Website Accessibility: Recent Attempts to Clarify Accessibility Obligations,” Locke Lord QuickStudy, April 12, 2021.
- Co-author, “UPDATE On The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) Leave Protections Following Enactment of Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021,” Locke Lord QuickStudy, December 28, 2020.
- Co-author, “Key Questions for Employers Facing COVID-19 (FAQ),” Locke Lord QuickStudy. July 20, 2020.
- Co-author, “Supreme Court Denies Review of ADA Website Accessibility Lawsuit, Highlighting Litigation Risks to Website and App Operators,” *The Computer Internet Lawyer*, January 2020.

## **MEDIA COMMENTARY**

- Quoted, “[New York Federal Courts a Battleground Amid Deepening Rift on Website Accessibility Suits](#),” *New York Law Journal*, June 16, 2021.