

# Elizabeth A. Coonan

## Shareholder



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Des Moines

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## Overview

Beth knows that the cornerstone of any effective human resources management strategy is a strong policy development and implementation process that adapt to the changing needs of her clients. Every report of discrimination, harassment or retaliation presents an opportunity for businesses to improve and every complex medical return to work situation or business visa conundrum presents an opportunity for businesses to foster a better connection with employees. From partnering with businesses to assess liability to training employees and fighting to protect confidential and trade secret information, it is important to Beth that her clients receive sound legal advice and a game plan for the future.

## Employment

Beth represents businesses across a variety of industries including technology, manufacturing, and agriculture and partners with employers of all sizes to find solutions to their workforce-related challenges in a rapidly changing regulatory environment.

## Hiring, Discipline and Discharge

Beth regularly works with employers to prepare enforceable employment agreements and when relationships break down, she devises creative solutions for separating employees while minimizing risk.

## Family and Medical Leave Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Workers' Compensation

With an extensive background in workers' compensation, FMLA and ADA, Beth helps her clients manage medical leave and return to work issues without falling out of compliance.

## Discrimination, Retaliation and Harassment

Beth partners with her clients to develop workable policies to prevent discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and regularly provides training on these topics. She also serves as an independent investigator and is a certified mediator.

## Restrictive Covenants

Having enforced and defended non-compete, non-solicitation, and other restrictive covenants on behalf of employers and employees and with talent management at a premium, Beth crafts these arrangements to protect her client in this highly competitive labor market.

## Immigration

Beth works with employers to develop plans for recruitment and compliance when foreign-born talent is necessary. She guides employers through the business visa process and also advises on policies and procedures related to immigration.

Beth has experience handling:

- H-1B visas and transfers
- H-2A program compliance
- L-1 visas
- J-1 waivers
- F-1 student issues, including STEM OPT
- I-9 compliance and training

## Experience

- **Long-term care facility:** Provided general employment advice and counseling on a myriad of complicated situations for a long-term care facility amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Manufacturer:** Defended large manufacturer in a high dollar and complex lawsuit involving harassment discrimination assault and battery. Reached a low five-figure settlement, which was a positive outcome for the client.
- **Business:** Successfully negotiated a complex retention arrangement for a C-suite employee of a highly visible business.
- **Manufacturer:** Represented large manufacturer in administrative contested case litigation in front of the Iowa Workers' Compensation Commissioner where the claimant was permanently and totally disabled. Secured exceedingly favorable settlement.
- **Public retirement system:** Defended a municipal retirement system in a certiorari action involving a member seeking to overturn a denial of an accidental disability pension. Defendant prevailed in having the writ annulled and costs assessed to the member.
- **Manufacturer:** Represented heavy manufacturer in trade secret misappropriation enforcement action involving a former employee which resulted in the employee's payment of monetary damages and settlement.

## Recognition

- *Chambers USA 2021:* Ranked Labor and Employment, Iowa Band 3. Beth has been ranked since 2019.
- *The Best Lawyers in America*® 2020, Labor & Employment Law and Workers' Compensation Law. Beth has been ranked since 2012 for Workers' Compensation and since 2018 for Labor and Employment.
- *Great Plains Super Lawyers*, Employment and Labor Law since 2016. She was first named to the list in 2014 as a rising star.

## Honors and Awards

- Junior League of Des Moines, Community Service Award, 2010, and Sustainer of the Year Award, 2020
- Des Moines *Business Record* Forty Under 40, 2011

## Insights

- Author, "New Opportunities to Hire Temporary Foreign Workers: the H-2B visa Program Gets a Needed Boost," Greater Des Moines Partnership, April 2021
- Author, "Update from Social Security Administration on No-Match Letters," *The Global Mobility Review*, March 2021
- Editor, *Iowa Human Resource Manual, 2011-2021*

## Activities and Affiliations

- American Immigration Lawyers Association
- Iowa Association of Workers Compensation Attorneys
- Iowa State Bar Association
- Labor and Employment Law Section
- Polk County Bar Association
- Polk County Women Attorneys

## Community Involvement and Pro Bono

- Dowling Catholic Riptide Swim Club, vice president
- Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Chair
- Iowa Department of Human Rights, board member
- Drake University Law School Board of Counselors, board member
- Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, board member
- Greater Des Moines Partnership Talent Development Board, board member
- Iowa Center for Economic Success Strategic Advisory Committee, member
- Young Women's Resource Center Advisory Board, member

## Presentations

- Presenter, "Navigating Complex Return to Work Situations: Pandemic Issues and Beyond," Iowa Employment Conference, April 2021
- Presenter, "Feed Your Mind - Navigating COVID-19: Vaccine, Leave, and Workforce Issues," FuseDSM, April 2021
- Presenter, "Legal Implications of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives," Iowa Employment Conference, October 2020

- Presenter, "Hiring and Discharge," Union County Development Association, May 2020
- Presenter, "COVID-19 and Iowa's Unemployment Compensation System," Iowa Association of Business and Industry, May 2020
- Presenter, "Renaissance Executive Forum COVID-19," April 2020
- Presenter, "Workers' Compensation and Risk Management," Master Builders of Iowa, February 2020

## Memberships

- Society for Human Resource Management

## Prior and Present Employment

- Dentons Davis Brown (formerly Davis Brown Law Firm)
- BrownWinick Law Firm

## Areas of focus

### Practices

- Employment and Labor
- Workers Compensation
- Business Immigration

### Industry sectors

- Forest Products and Agribusiness
- Communications
- Construction
- Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Professional Services
- Technology
- Life Sciences and Health Care
- Retail

## Education

- Drake University Law School, 2002, JD
- Miami University, 1999, B.A International Studies; B.A. Political Science

## Admissions and qualifications

- Iowa
- US Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- US District Court for the Northern District of Iowa
- US District Court for the Southern District of Iowa

## Languages

- English