

Lori T. Chesser

Shareholder



Shareholder

Des Moines

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Overview

“She is one of the best-known immigration lawyers in the state.”

-Chambers USA, Reference Feedback

Lori Chesser is a preeminent immigration lawyer and advocate. With a degree in finance, she initially practiced corporate law. Recognizing the need for immigration services in Iowa, she developed that practice and has worked primarily in immigration law for more than 20 years.

Lori assists employers, business owners, and individuals as they navigate the complex U.S. immigration system. Her clients range from small businesses to Fortune 500 companies in sectors including healthcare, IT, insurance, agriculture, chemical, higher education, churches, and other non-profit entities.

The immigration process is often complicated and arduous for individuals and companies alike. When employers identify a foreign national as the best candidate for the job, they count on Lori’s guidance in navigating the immigration maze. Lori has assisted organizations in hiring scientists, investors, entrepreneurs, researchers, doctors, artists, religious workers, athletes, and other professionals to legally live and work in the United States. In addition to employers and their employees, she also represents entrepreneurs starting businesses in the U.S. and individuals sponsoring family members or wanting to naturalize.

One client recently provided this feedback, “I feel like I get top-notch really high-quality work from her; she's so knowledgeable about the industry and has a ton of experience. She's good at helping with strategic planning and whether it's implementing a new policy or trying something new, she can really provide that expert opinion and advice. Her advice goes a long way.”

Lori has experience and success with numerous aspects of immigration law including:

- H-1B
- L-1
- E-1 and E-2
- R-1

- O-1
- F-1 STEM EAD
- H-4 EAD
- PERM
- Multi-national Manager EB1
- Outstanding Professor and Researcher EB1
- Extraordinary Ability EB1
- NIW (including for physicians)
- Schedule A, Group II
- Adjustment of Status
- Consular Processing
- Naturalization
- Certificate of Citizenship
- I-130
- Visa applications
- I-9 Compliance and Training

Lori works collaboratively with other Davis Brown lawyers to answer her clients' employment, tax, estate planning, corporate structure, and compliance questions that intersect with immigration law.

Immigration Advocacy

"The 'preeminent lawyer' in the immigration field"

-Chambers USA Feedback

Lori is a staunch advocate for her clients and all immigrants in the community.

- Has served on numerous AILA national committees to both liaise with the government and help form advocacy strategy. Currently a member of the Worksite Verification Liaison Committee.
- Works with business associations to inform advocacy for immigration reform, including the Greater Des Moines Partnership and the Iowa Business Council. She is past chair of the American Immigration Council Board of Trustees.
- Donates hundreds of hours of advocacy and pro bono representation
- Co-founded the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Iowa/Nebraska Chapter, and served as its first Chair
- Advocated for the opening of the Des Moines Suboffice of the Immigration Service so Iowa residents would not need to travel to Omaha for their immigration applications

"She is knowledgeable, responsive, and proactive."

-Chambers USA, Reference Feedback

Recognition

- AV Preeminent™ rated by Martindale-Hubbell. The highest peer rating standard. This rating signifies that a

large number of the lawyer's peers rank him or her at the highest level of professional excellence for their legal knowledge, communication skills, and ethical standards.

- Lori was also awarded a Client Distinction Award, an honor given to lawyers who demonstrate superior communications ability, responsiveness, quality of service, and value for money as voted on by clients.
- *Chambers USA 2020*: Ranked in Labor & Employment: Immigration, Iowa Band 1. Lori has been ranked Band 1 for several years.
- *Best Lawyers in America*® 2021: Immigration Law. Lori has been ranked since 2003.
 - *Best Lawyers*® 2020: Immigration Law "Lawyer of the Year" in the Des Moines Metro

Honors and Awards

- *JD Supra 2021*: "Reader's Choice Award Top Author" in Immigration
- A. Arthur Davis Distinguished Community Leadership Award, Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute, 2015
- President's Commendation, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), 2012
- Immigrant Champion Award, Immigrant Entrepreneurs Summit, 2011
- Footsteps Award, Diocese of Des Moines, for work in social action, 2009
- *Business Record's* Women of Influence Award, 2008
- Mary Louise Smith Human Rights Award, Des Moines Human Rights Commission, 2007
- *Business Record's* Forty Under 40, Class of 2002
- Pro Bono Award, Iowa State and Polk County Bar Associations, 1999
- Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute, class of 1993

In the Media

- Quoted, "What legal trends should employers be thinking about?," *Business Record*, March 2021
- Quoted, "Iowa legislation could strip licenses from firms that employ undocumented workers," *Iowa Capital Dispatch*, January 2021
- Quoted, "Look for Change in Tone on Immigration, Foreign Workers Under Biden," *HR Daily Advisor*, November 2020
- Quoted, "Immigration Fee Increases Put on Hold," SHRM, October 2020
- Quoted, "New rules limit H-1B, employment immigration processes," *HR Laws*, September 2020
- Quoted, "Suspension of new H-1B visas could leave Eastern Iowa businesses vulnerable, experts say," *The Gazette*, July 2020
- Quoted, "New Restrictions on Work Visas Seen Further Limiting Employer Options," *HR Daily Advisor*, June 2020
- Quoted, "U.S. entry under certain work visas barred for rest of 2020," *HR Laws*, June 2020
- Quoted, "Tighter immigration policy may push employers to expand outside the US," *HR Dive*, May 2020
- Quoted, "Employer Community Sees Downsides to Coronavirus Order Limiting Immigration," *HR Daily Advisor*, April 2020

- Quoted, “Report: U.S. visas should focus on economic development,” *Business Record*, May 2019
- Interview, “DACA and Immigration Reform,” *Up Close*, KCCI, January 2018
- Quoted, “New Immigration Bill Called Radical and Not Proemployment,” *HR Daily Advisor*, August 2017
- Quoted, “Supreme Court’s Action on ‘Travel Ban’ Eases Some Employer Concerns,” *HR Daily Advisor*, June 2017
- Quoted, “Do Your Employees Know What to Do if ICE Visits?,” *HR Daily Advisor*, March 2017
- Quoted, “If ICE Comes Knocking: I-9 Audits and Travel Implications,” *HR Daily Advisor*, March 2017
- Quoted, “Employers Face Uncertainty Over New Travel Ban, H1B Delay,” *HR Daily Advisor*, March 2017
- Quoted, “Report: Immigration fueling Greater D.M. growth,” *Business Record*, August 2016

Insights

- Davis Brown Immigration Law Blog
- Author, “Guest Opinion: Four ways we can promote unity,” *Business Record Fearless*, January 2021
- Panelist, “Immigration in the United States,” Iowa State Bar Association 2020 Corporate Counsel and Trade Regulation Seminar, October 2020
- Co-Author, “Doing Business in the United States: Iowa,” *PLC multi-jurisdictional guide*, Practical Law Company, July 2020
- Author, “Are Your I-9s Ready for the New Normal?,” Iowa Association of Business and Industry, June 2020
- Author, “Tool Time: What You Need to Sue the Government,” thinkimmigration, February 2019
- Author, “Make sure employees know what to do if ICE raids your workplace,” *Iowa Employment Law Letter*, October 2017
- Author, “New I-9 does not change sticky compliance issues,” *Iowa Employment Law Letter*, October 2017
- Author, “Guest Opinion: Dodging decision depletion,” *Business Record*, August 2017
- Author, “Guest Opinion: Embracing uncertainty,” *Business Record*, April 2017
- Author, “A new era in immigration enforcement: what employers should know,” *Iowa Employment Law Letter*, April 2017
- Author, “Opinion: The nuanced design behind gender equality,” *Business Record*, October 2016
- Author, “Guest Opinion: Mindfulness over multitasking,” *Business Record*, August 2016

Activities and Affiliations

- American Immigration Council Board of Trustees, former member
- American Immigration Lawyers Association
 - Worksite Verification Liaison Committee, member
 - USCIS Liaison Committee, former member
 - Nebraska Service Center Liaison Committee, former member

- Immigration Reform Committee, former member
- IMMLAW-The National Consortium of Immigration Law Firms
- Iowa State Bar Association
- Polk County Bar Association
- Polk County Women Attorneys, former president

Community Involvement and Pro Bono

- Greater Des Moines Partnership
 - Chair, Global DSM: Talent Acquisition Strategy Initiative
 - Chair, Immigration Council
 - Chair, Inclusion Council
- Member and Former President, Nexus Business Women's Executive Alliance
- Former President, Iowa International Center
- Former President, Catholic Charities

Presentations

- Panelist, "Presidential Proclamations & Waivers," Iowa/Nebraska Annual CLE, October 2020
- Panelist, "Immigration in the United States," Iowa State Bar Association 2020 Corporate Counsel and Trade Regulation Seminar, October 2020
- Panelist, "Nonimmigrant Options for Entrepreneurs," American Immigration Lawyers Association Audio Seminar, August 2020
- Panelist, "Impact of COVID-19 on Immigration and the Employment Lifecycle," American Immigration Lawyers Association Annual Conference, July 2020
- "Preparing Your Business for an I-9 Audit 2020," Iowa Employment Conference, April 2020
- "The Latest in Immigration Law," Iowa Corporate Counsel and Trade Regulation Seminar, September 2019
- Panelist, "Buttoning Up: A Compliance Checklist," American Immigration Lawyers Association webinar, July 2019
- "Immigration from the Employer's Perspective: Avoiding Jail, Debarment and Other Calamities," Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, June 2019
- "I-9s in the Age of Increased Enforcement: Walking the Tightrope," Iowa Employment Conference, April 2019
- "Immigration and Employment: An Update," Davis Brown Spring Seminar, March 2019
- Panelist, "Preparing for Who Could Show Up at Your Door: Advanced Issues in Worksite Enforcement," American Immigration Lawyers Association MidWinter Conference, January 2019.
- "Minesweeping: Issues in Adjustment of Status," University of Texas Conference on Immigration and Nationality Law, October 2018
- "Hot Topics and Emerging Issues in ICE Audits and USCIS/FDINS Investigations," University of Texas Conference on Immigration and Nationality Law, October 2018.
- "Hot Topics in Immigration Law," Iowa State Bar Association Corporate Counsel and Trade Regulation

Seminar, October 2018

- “I-9s: The Why, Who, When, Where, What and How,” Iowa Employment Conference, April 2018.
- “Someone’s Knocking at the Door: Are you ready for increased immigration compliance?,” Davis Brown Spring Seminar, April 2018
- Panelist, “Public Policy Issue Forum: Immigration Reform,” Greater Des Moines Partnership, December 2017.
- “Hire American: Immigration Law for Employment Lawyers,” Iowa State Bar Association Seminar, November 2017
- “Recruiting Foreign Workers,” Iowa Employment Conference, September 2017
- Panelist, “Immigrants in the Workforce,” Iowa Ideas Conference, September 2017
- Panelist, “Welcoming Cities Resolution,” Drake University, Diocese of Des Moines, LULAC, AI Exito, American Friends Service Committee, July 2017.
- “Surviving the Fire Swamp: I-9s, immigration-related anti-discrimination and unexpected challenges of unusual size,” Iowa Employment Conference, April 2017
- Co-presenter, “I-9 Compliance: How to Prepare for the New Enforcement Focus,” Iowa Employment Conference, April 2017
- “Navigating the Executive Orders on Immigration,” Iowa State University, February 2017.
- Panelist, “Introduction to ICE HSI Audits, AILA Employer Compliance and Worksite Enforcement Conference, February 2017
- Panelist, “The Ethics and Obligations of Having ‘Knowledge’” AILA Employer Compliance and Worksite Enforcement Conference, February 2017

Prior and Present Employment

- Dentons Davis Brown (formerly Davis Brown Law Firm)

Areas of focus

Practices

- Immigration
- Venture Technology and Emerging Growth Companies

Industry sectors

- Communications
- Construction
- Energy
- Financial Institutions
- Life Sciences and Health Care
- Manufacturing

Education

- University of Georgia School of Law, 1987, JD
- Western Illinois University, 1984, BBA

Admissions and qualifications

- Iowa

Languages

- English