



Since the sweeping labor and employment laws of the mid-1960s, employers have faced an ever-increasing number of laws and regulatory agencies governing their businesses and employee relations. Numerous federal and state laws have been added to the Equal Pay Act (1963), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967) including, but not limited to: the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the North Carolina Wage and Hour Act.

The Labor and Employment Practice Group attorneys of Ward and Smith, P.A. understand the burden these laws place on employers. We work with clients to develop, implement, and defend policies and practices related to all aspects of the employment relationship to lessen the impact of these burdens to the greatest extent possible. We are a trusted advisor and a fierce advocate for our clients.

We strive to know and understand the frequent changes in the law — before clients call for help. We take a proactive, twofold approach to help clients avoid personnel and employment law disputes resulting from unfair employment practices. Several of our attorneys focus on business and human relations practices such as preparing personnel manuals, employment contracts, compensation agreements, documents associated with workforce reductions, and settlement agreements and releases associated with other forms of termination. Other attorneys focus on employment litigation.

Because we litigate our own cases, we better serve our clients. Our litigation experience encompasses all types of civil rights discrimination, affirmative action compliance and claims, state and federal wage and hour issues, wrongful termination charges, unemployment claims, breach of employment contracts, occupational safety and health matters, labor disputes, and workers' compensation claims.

On behalf of our clients, we appear before state and federal courts and regulatory and administrative agencies such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the National Labor Relations Board, the North Carolina Industrial Commission, the North Carolina Division of Employment Security, and federal and state Departments of Labor. We also assist our clients in complying with the rules of the various regulatory agencies including the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs. Our attorneys draw on the expertise of attorneys in all other groups of the Firm and serve clients statewide, nationwide, and worldwide. In addition, our attorneys are increasingly involved in alternative dispute resolution and often serve as arbitrators and mediators.

The Labor and Employment Practice Group serves clients from all areas of business — from Fortune 500 companies to mid-size and small employers. Our attorneys supplement the work of in-house counsel employed by large companies, and we handle all aspects of the legal process for small companies. Clients include banking and financial institutions, medical practices, boat builders, communications companies, construction companies, distributors, educational institutions, food service companies, insurance companies, manufacturers, nonprofit organizations, public utilities, publishers, retailers, state and local governments, and technology companies.

The reach of our Labor and Employment attorneys extends to offering seminars not only for national seminar providers, trade associations, and smaller organizations such as chambers of commerce and local governments, but also for clients, to educate management and employees. Topics include employment law compliance, sexual harassment, best human resources practices, supervisory education, and avoiding unionization. Surveys completed by seminar participants give Ward and Smith the highest ratings for the competence, knowledge, and skill of our attorneys.

We also make available our Employment Law Blueprint, which is a collaborative publication developed by our Labor and Employment Practice Group. We hope that employers find it helpful.