HALL BOOTH SMITH, P.C.

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Partner

706.243.6231

BIOGRAPHY | EXPERIENCE | CREDENTIALS | MEMBERSHIPS | RECOGNITION | PRESENTATIONS | PUBLICATIONS | VIDEOS | IN THE PRESS

Biography

Melanie V. Slaton’s civil litigation practice emphasizes labor and employment law, including employment discrimination and employment harassment. Since 1988, she has tried more than 40 cases in California and Georgia, recording impressive results for private and government clients. She also specializes in education law, including representing Muscogee County School District in teacher non-renewals, student tribunals, and discipline issues as well as special education matters.

Melanie’s litigation experience includes complex class actions in both state and federal court. Melanie is the Chair of Hall Booth Smith's Labor & Employment practice. She has extensive experience defending employers in individual and class action wage and hour, discrimination, and harassment claims, as well as in arbitrations and mediations. She has argued in front of the California Court of Appeal and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, and she is a member of the bar of the United States Supreme Court.

More +

Services

Business Litigation

Education

Entertainment

General Liability

Government Affairs

Governmental Liability

Labor & Employment

Workers’ Compensation

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Before moving to Georgia in 2005, Melanie was a Senior Attorney with the California Labor Department, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement for five years. Prior to her work with the Department of Labor, she was a partner in a Los Angeles labor/entertainment firm for 12 years, representing both plaintiffs and defendants in a number of high-profile cases.

She has represented clients in disputes with both state and federal agencies, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Georgia Department of Labor, and the U.S. Education Department's Office of Civil Rights and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance.

Melanie has assisted in conducting workplace internal investigations and has substantial experience counseling companies and government entities undergoing major involuntary workforce reductions. She has also been recognized by *Georgia Trend Magazine* as a Legal Elite in the practice specialty of Labor & Employment. Melanie is a 1988 graduate of Berkeley Law School and is a Board Member of Columbus Scholars, Inc. and the Board of the Columbus Museum of Art.

Experience

Business Litigation

- Negotiated severance agreements and executive compensation packages.
- Experience litigating non-compete agreements and non-solicitation agreements.
- General business litigation.

Education

- More than a decade representing Georgia school districts.
- Litigated issues concerning student molestation and abuse.

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- Experienced in guiding school districts through contested “fair dismissal” hearings.
- Substantial reduction-in-force (RIF) review and counseling.
- Personnel policy drafting and review of existing policies.
- Board of Education policy review and drafting.
- Successfully represented governmental agencies in Section 1981 and 1983 cases.
- Special Education and Individualized Education Program (IEP) litigation.
- Open Records Act request review and counseling.
- First Amendment / Student Speech: Counseling on so-called “Tinker” problems, involving potential school discipline of disruptive student speech, including symbolic speech such as Pledge of Allegiance and silent protest issues.
- First Amendment / Student Speech: Advice and review of student off-campus speech (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) which may give rise to school discipline.

Governmental Liability

- Successfully defended major Georgia school district against group of 14 employees who claimed race discrimination in connection with pension eligibility and payments.
- Achieved summary judgment in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia and later argued successfully to uphold the lower court ruling before the U.S Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

Labor & Employment

- Represented clients in protected class discrimination litigation.
- Successfully achieved summary judgement in Title VII, Title IX litigation.

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Sexual Harassment, Race, & Gender Discrimination

- Practice focuses on identifying and avoiding problems before they arise through counseling, compliance audits, and training.
- Extensive consultation with supervisors in public and private entities regarding race and gender-neutral hiring, promotion, and discipline systems and methods,
- Substantial experience in training public and private entity supervisors in sexual harassment law and other employment laws and regulations.
- Highly skilled at developing and presenting sexual harassment workshops for small, medium, and large companies. These workshops are tailored to the unique needs and corporate culture of the individual firm.

Credentials

Admitted

State Courts:

- California, 1988
- Georgia, 2003

U.S. District Courts:

- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia

U.S. Courts of Appeals:

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit

U.S. Supreme Court

Education

- J.D.; University of California, Berkely; 1988
- B.A., California State University, 1985

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Memberships

- American Bar Association, Labor & Employment Section
- California Labor & Employment Law Section
- Litigation Counsel of America, Senior Fellow
- Columbus Bar Association
- DRI

More +

- Fountain City Bar Association
- Georgia Association of Black Women Lawyers
- Leadership Georgia Class of 2007
- Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)
- The Columbus Museum, Board of Trustees

Recognition

- AV Preeminent® Peer Review Rated™, High Ethical Standing, Martindale-Hubbell
- Legal Elite, Labor and Employment Law; Georgia Trend Magazine; 2008, 2013-2014
- Woman of Distinction, Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia, 2009
- Fellow, Litigation Counsel of America
- Peter Perlman Service Award, Litigation Counsel of America

Presentations

- **Student Suicide and Bullying – Who is on The Hook?**
  DRI Conference; Nashville, Tennessee; August 2021

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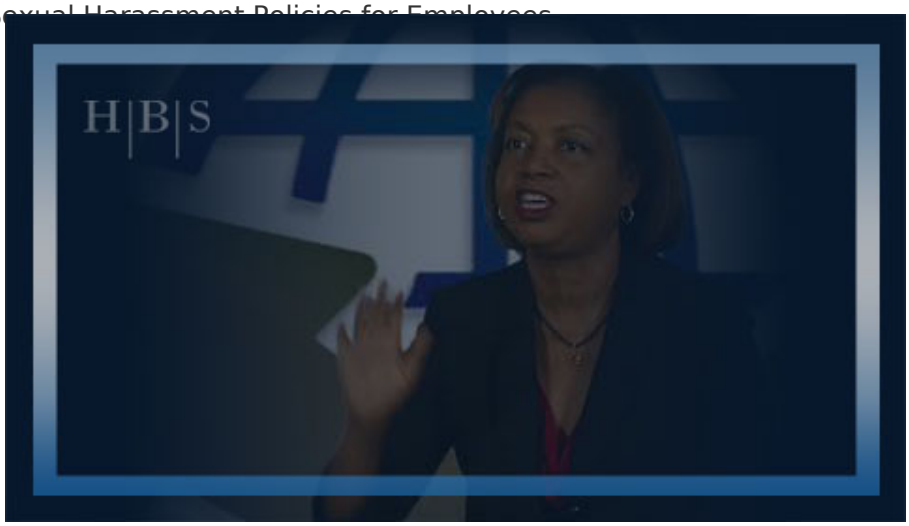
Publications

- **US Supreme Court Holds That Title VII Protects Homosexual And Transgender Employees**
  HBS Employment Updates Blog; June 23, 2020
- **A Social Media Exception? Student Speech Rights: Are Public School Employees Liable When Denying Settled Student Speech Rights Off Campus?**
  DRI – For The Defense, June 2020
- **What Should Employers Do When Employees Refuse To Return To Work For Fear Of COVID-19?**
  HBS Employment Updates Blog; May 8, 2020
- **Georgia Appeals Court Narrow Justification for Workers' Comp. Denial**
  HBS Workers' Compensation Blog, April 2016

Videos

Sexual Harassment Policies for Employees



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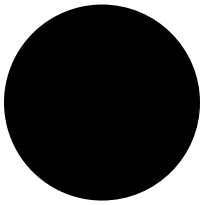

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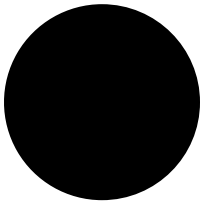

Retaliation in the Workplace for Employees

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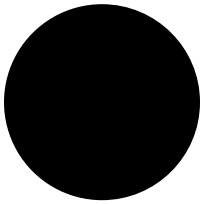

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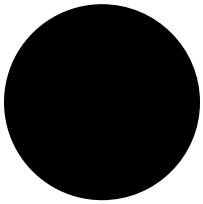

How Independent Contractors Handle Employment Matters

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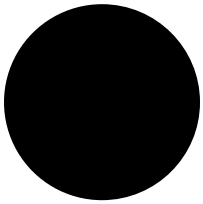

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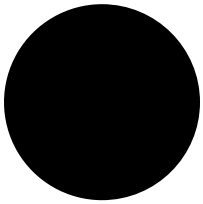

In the Press

US Supreme Court Holds That Title VII Protects

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Homosexual And Transgender Employees

June 23, 2020

Written by: Melanie V. Slaton, Esq., Mariel E. Smith, Esq., and Nicholas J. Garcia, Esq. On June 15, 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States ("SCOTUS") delivered the landmark opinion in Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia and broadened Title VII liability to include actions by an employer based on the homosexuality or transgender status of the individual

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What Should Employers Do When Employees Refuse To Return To Work For Fear Of COVID-19?

May 8, 2020

Written by: Melanie V. Slaton,

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Esq., Mariel E. Smith, Esq., and Nicholas J. Garcia, Esq. As states struggle through the process of re-opening in the wake of COVD-19, many employers are also wrestling with the question of what to do about employees who refuse work due to safety concerns or in order to take advantage

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HBS Columbus Partner Melanie Slaton to Lead Employment Practice Group

December 10, 2018

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA — Hall Booth Smith, P.C. Partner Melanie V. Slaton will lead the firm's Employment Practice Group that helps clients avoid, resolve and prevail in a wide variety of disputes with employees. A seasoned litigator with more than three decades of experience who is based in HBS's office in Columbus, Georgia, Slaton

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has handled

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HBS Columbus office expands with the addition of 10 attorneys from Hatcher Stubbs

January 4, 2016

Columbus, GA — Hall Booth Smith, PC (HBS) is pleased to announce expansion of the HBS Columbus office with the addition of 10 attorneys from the law firm of Hatcher Stubbs, Columbus, GA. This expansion will result in the total of 16 attorneys in the HBS Columbus office and over 150 attorneys firmwide in 11

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HBS Columbus office expands with attorneys

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from Hatcher Stubbs

October 2, 2015

Columbus, GA — Hall Booth Smith, PC (HBS) is pleased to announce expansion of the HBS Columbus office with the addition of 10 attorneys from the law firm of Hatcher Stubbs, Columbus, GA. This expansion will result in the total of 15 attorneys in the HBS Columbus office and 155 attorneys firmwide in 11 offices.

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