Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C.
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Robert D. Zaruta

Shareholder



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Bob's practice is focused on a variety of labor & employment matters, including litigation. He has extensive experience working with both private and public employers, counseling clients on hiring and firing issues, wage and hour issues, employer/independent contractor issues, collective bargaining, employee handbooks, and compliance with workplace laws including FMLA, Title VII, ADA, ADEA, FLSA and more.

He represents several public school systems, assisting in disciplinary issues, grievances, arbitration and union contract negotiations. His practice also includes representing employers in defense of discrimination, sexual harassment, wage and hour, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, wrongful termination and other employment-related claims. He also advises educational institutions at all levels on Title IX compliance, providing training, guidance, and services on all aspects of the Title IX grievance process, including investigations.

Bob has defended employers in EEOC, DOL, PHRC and other agency investigations alleging discrimination or pay practice violations. He offers sexual harassment training for employers, assists employers in handling sexual harassment complaints, and conducts internal investigations. He has represented employers in unfair labor practices actions, including appearances before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, the National Labor Relations Board and the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board.

Practice Areas

- Labor & Employment
- Workers' Compensation

Education

- Syracuse University College of Law, J.D.
  Dean's List; Best Advocate Award – Trial Advocacy Class
- University of Pittsburgh, B.S.
  cum laude; Dean's List; Sigma Alpha Lambda National Honors Organization

Admissions

- Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Pennsylvania

Representative Experience

- Successfully defended a school district client against a claim of sex discrimination in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania. The Court granted the client's Motion for Summary Judgment on all counts and ordered the dismissal of the lawsuit in its entirety
- Obtained a favorable decision from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania for a client. The Court granted the client's motion for summary judgment thereby dismissing all ADA and FMLA claims
- Successfully argued on behalf of a school district in an appeal to the Commonwealth Court. On appeal, the underlying trial court decision was reversed, and the Commonwealth Court granted the school district's petition to vacate a labor arbitration award
- Successfully defended a school against an unfair labor practice charge before the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania by securing a reversal of the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board's Final Order
- Successfully argued on behalf of a county against a labor union's appeal to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. On appeal, the Supreme Court affirmed the underlying Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board's Final Order which found that the County did not commit unfair labor practices. It has been estimated this result saved the County a minimum of $6 million
- Successfully argued against the enforcement of a physician's non-compete agreement
- Successfully resolved a client's unemployment compensation and workers' compensation tax audits
- Involved in lawsuits filed in state and federal courts, as well as charges filed with the EEOC and PHRC, including claims for wrongful discharge and race, age, sex, religion and disability discrimination

Honors

- Included in The Best Lawyers in America® (Employment Law - Management, and Litigation - Labor and Employment), 2024-2027



- Included in Pennsylvania Super Lawyers® Rising Stars, 2023-2024



Community and Professional Service

Community and Professional Service

- NAMI of Erie, *Board President*
- Erie Club, *Board Member and Vice President; Former Treasurer*
- Civil Service Commission for the City of Erie, *Chair, 2018-present*

- Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, *Erie Ambassador*
- Junior Achievement, *Former Board Member*

Professional Affiliations

- Erie County Bar Association, *Young Lawyers Division Leadership Committee*
- Pennsylvania Bar Association
- Pittsburgh Human Resources Association, *Member*
- Lawyers Associated Worldwide (LAW) Junior Lawyer Network, *Member*

Presentations

Speaking Engagements

- Firm's Workplace Law Forum, 2015, 2017-2019, 2021-2026
- MBA HR Roundtable: How to Handle ADA Accommodations, July 2026
- Firm's Annual Municipal Law Symposium: Negotiating a Collective Bargaining Agreement, April 2026
- MBA Annual HR Conference: Mastering Internal Investigations, November 2025
- Firm's Annual Municipal Law Symposium, April 2025: "Mock Public Meeting" panelist
- Firm's Lunch & Learn on Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI), February 2025
- MBA Annual HR Conference: Order in the Court: How Recent Decisions are Shaping the Workplace, November 2024
- Firm's Municipal Law Symposium, April 2024: Labor Relations Update and Municipal Law Roundtable panelist
- Northwest Superintendents' Summit: Co-Presenter with Mark Wassell on Negotiations, April 2024
- The Nonprofit Partnership Seminar: Hot Topics in Employment Law & How Knox Law Can Help, March 2024
- Presentation for PASBO (Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officers) on FMLA and other leave, February 2024
- Featured HR Academy Speaker for Pittsburgh Human Resources Association (an affiliate of SHRM)
- Penn State Behrend School of Business, Guest Lecturer, November 2022 and 2023
- MBA Annual HR Conference: Labor & Employment Law Update: How the Biden Administration Is Changing the Law of the Workplace, November 2023
- HVA Senior Living Alliance Law Seminar, May 2016-2020 and 2023
- Firm's Annual Municipal Law Symposium, April 2016-2019, 2021, 2023
- WQLN Podcast: *We Question & Learn*, Episode 51, March 2023 (labor shortages, non-compete agreements, and social networking & the cancel culture)
- MBA Annual HR Conference: The Labor Landscape: Updates for HR Professionals in 2022, September 2022
- Penn State Behrend Center for Family Business Webinar, November 2021: HR and Legal Issues Faced by Family-Owned Businesses
- Firm's Professional Advisor Symposium in Pittsburgh, PA, October 2021
- MBA Annual HR Conference: Employment Law Updates on the PRO Act of 2021 and Changes to Labor Law, September 2021
- MBA's April HR Roundtable Webinar: What the Biden Administration Means for Employers, April 2021
- NWIRC Webinar: Employers Guide to COVID-19 Vaccinations and Related Topics, February 2021
- Riverview Intermediate Unit #6 Superintendent Summit, April 2019
- Keystone Shortway PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) Meeting, August 2018
- Manufacturer & Business Association Lunch & Law Session, February 2018

- Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association Region 8 Meeting, October 2017
- Manufacturer & Business Association HR Conference, October 2017
- NWIRC Manufacturers Growth Conference, Erie, May 2017
- HVA Senior Living Alliance Positive Workplace Seminar, October 2016
- Human Resources Section of the PA/NJ Rural Electric Cooperative, September 2016
- HR & Employment Law Roundtable, Manufacturer & Business Association, January 2016
- Firm's Next Generation Happy Hour, September 2015

Articles and Publications

- Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employer Obligations

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About Knox Law

Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett, P.C. is a full service law firm that has provided practical solutions to businesses, families, public entities, and nonprofits for over 65 years. Our practice areas include ADR Services, Bankruptcy & Creditors' Rights, Business & Tax, Business Succession, Construction Law, Elder Law, Employee Benefits, Environmental Law, Estate Planning & Administration, Governmental Practice, Health Law, Intellectual Property & Technology, Labor & Employment, Litigation, Mergers & Acquisitions, Public Finance & Bonds, Real Estate, and Workers' Compensation.