

Stephen R. Polauf

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Stephen Polauf devotes his legal practice to representing both employees and management in labor and employment law matters. His diverse practice encompasses advice and counsel, legal compliance, and litigation for clients on both sides of employment disputes. Stephen specializes in advising small and mid-sized businesses while also advocating for workers facing workplace challenges, offering competitive billing rates without compromising quality to all clients. After gaining experience at several law firms, Stephen concluded he could be most effective through direct representation and set out to establish his own independent law practice in New Haven, Connecticut. His experience representing both employers and employees provides him with unique insights that benefit all his clients. He currently services individuals and organizations across Connecticut's eight counties in private and non-profit sectors, including family-owned shops, franchises, restaurants, advocacy groups, and workers from various industries seeking redress for workplace violations. Prior to becoming an attorney, Stephen worked for the federal and local governments as an analyst at a municipal campaign finance agency and as a staffer for a member of Congress, experiences that inform his balanced approach to employment law.

EDUCATION

University of Virginia School of Law
Charlottesville, VA
Juris Doctor, May 2022

- Virginia Journal of International Law, Editor

Goucher College
Towson, MD
Bachelor of Art, August 2015

BAR ADMISSIONS

- **Connecticut:** Admitted in December 2022 (Juris No. 444124). Sat for and passed the July 2022 UBE.
- **New York:** Transfer application in progress. Certified by Second Judicial Department, Appellate Division.

PRACTICE AREA / KEY SKILLS

- Employment Litigation (Management-side); Labor & Employment; General Commercial Litigation.

Employer Handbooks: Drafted, reviewed, revised, and updated workplace regulations and around a dozen employee handbooks for employers of all sizes.

Client Relations/Negotiations: Capable in client relations, explaining legal issues in layman's terms, and working with opposing counsel in all stages of litigation.

Litigation: Proficient in researching and writing successful motions. Wrote winning dispositive motions in state and federal trial courts and a successful brief with the Second Circuit.

Fact Investigation: Managed discovery production of 3,000+ documents in the District of Connecticut. Advanced proficiency in Word, Excel, AI, and enterprise-level document management software.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Labor & Employment Law Practice
Self-Employed

January 2025–Present

- Independent legal practice focusing on labor and employment law, representing and providing consultation to management-side clients and representing employees across all eight counties of the State of Connecticut.

Employment Litigation Associate
Kaufman Borgeest & Ryan, LLP, Stamford CT

September 2024–November 2024

- Represented employers before the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities ("CHRO"), required mediation fact-finding conferences, developed case strategies, and prepared clients and witnesses in advance.

- Submitted settlement conference memoranda and position statements in state and federal court, assessed settlement demands, and counseled clients regarding settlement offers and counter offers.
- Coordinated assigned cases with insurance carriers, provided detailed updates and proposed legal strategies for approval under applicable Employment Litigation Practice Insurance agreements.

Litigation Associate, Employment Practice Group

January 2024–August 2024

Zangari Cohn Cuthbertson Duhl & Grello P.C., New Haven, CT

- Prepared and submitted position statements before court-annexed mediations, resulting in favorable settlements of two breaches of contract suits in the District of Connecticut and a state discrimination suit in the Connecticut Superior Court.
- Wrote and researched a brief submitted to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals arguing that a plaintiff’s petition for leave to appeal the denial of class certification was beyond the time limitation under FRAP 4(a)(5)(A) and could not benefit from tolling under established Supreme Court precedent.
- Drafted, revised, and provided counsel on handbooks for employers ranging from national corporations to family-owned small businesses; provided guidance and counsel to management on workplace policies, state employment law compliance, and employee discipline and terminations.
- Prepared discovery requests and objections, motions to compel, and Practice Book 13-22(b)/FRCP Rule 37(a)(1) communications with opposing counsel.

Labor & Employment Associate

May 2023–November 2023

Ford & Harrison LLP, Hartford, CT

- Represented employers in wage and hour suits, discrimination claims, and administrative proceedings before the NLRB, CHRO, and EEOC and in state and federal court.
- Secured dismissal through dispositive motions of claims brought under Title II and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq., Connecticut Fair Employment Practices Act (“CFEPA”), Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46a-51 et seq., the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (“FMLA”), 29 U.S.C. § 2601 et seq., ERISA, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”) As Amended, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq. In the District of Connecticut.
- Won summary judgment on a breach of contract claim in Connecticut Superior Court; Reviewed, revised, and rewrote employer handbooks for a large private hospital, a Connecticut-based nurse staffing agency, and a non-unionized phone tower construction contractor to comply with the NLRB’s new standard under Stericycle.

Litigation Law Clerk/Associate, Summer Associate

May 2021–January 2023

Chipman Mazzucco Emerson LLC, Danbury, CT

- Obtained a five-figure settlement for a client for resolution of an age-discrimination complaint before the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights; drafted the affidavit of complaint and responsive brief.
- Practiced civil litigation, probate litigation, business, and trademark litigation in a general practice firm before focusing on employment law.

P R I O R E X P E R I E N C E

Summer Law Clerk, Homicide Unit

May 2020–August 2020

The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn, NY

- Performed research and drafted defense arguments, including self-defense in a homicide case based on Brady disclosures; prepared memoranda and presented an analysis for constitutional reasons to exclude the state’s evidence; reviewed and indexed discovery.
- Conducted client intake interviews, went to state court bail hearings, and took part in an internal mock trial program with fellow summer clerks.

Candidate Services Liaison, Guidance and Policy Unit

October 2017–July 2019

New York City Campaign Finance Board, New York, NY

- Advised campaigns on agency regulations and city campaign finance laws, conducted public compliance training sessions, and assisted with investigations and enforcement.
- Managed a portfolio of over 200 campaigns and coordinated with the agency’s internal auditing unit to flag and resolve reporting discrepancies.

Constituent Services Representative, District Office

February 2016–October 2017

United States House of Representatives (NY-09), Brooklyn, NY

- Worked with federal administrative agencies to address constituents' complaints or pending cases involving immigration, workers' compensation, and veterans' benefits, and cultivate relations with district stakeholders.

P R O F E S S I O N A L A S S O C I A T I O N S

Connecticut Bar Association, Member

December 2022–Present

- Labor and Employment Section
- Litigation Section
- Young Lawyers Section

West Hartford Chamber of Commerce, Member

March 2025 – Present

Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce, Member

April 2025 – Present

P U B L I C A T I O N S

- *Front-loading: The Silver Lining for Employers in CT's New Paid Sick Leave Law*, HARTFORD BUS. J., Mar. 10, 2025.