

Katharine J. Liao

Partner

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Languages spoken

English | Chinese (Mandarin)



About Katharine

Katharine Liao represents employers in the retail, entertainment, technology and manufacturing industries in all aspects of employment-related litigation before federal and state courts and administrative agencies. Katharine's practice is diverse, multijurisdictional and entails litigation, counseling and training, investigations and corporate transactions.

Resident in the firm's New York office, her practice is global with a particular emphasis and extensive experience with California and New York wage and hour class action litigation. Having defeated class certification on multiple occasions, Katharine focuses her practice on defending wage-and-hour class actions involving claims of meal and rest period violations, failure to pay wages and/or bonuses, off-the-clock work, seating claims and employee misclassification.

Katharine also has significant experience litigating harassment, discrimination, retaliation, restrictive covenant, breach of contract and wrongful termination matters.

Katharine utilizes her litigation experience to advise companies of all sizes and in all industries of best employment-related practices in an effort to avoid employment litigation and disputes. For her clients, she is a trusted, practical advisor who provides day-to-day counseling on various employment issues, including employment policies and procedures, diversity, equity and inclusion, pay equity issues, executive transitions, wage-and-hour compliance, the use and risks of artificial intelligence, leave and accommodation issues and employment and commission agreements. Katharine also provides due diligence in mergers and acquisitions and assists with reductions in force or mass layoffs.

Katharine regularly conducts general and bespoke training for company workforces and management teams – from anti-harassment training to diversity, equity and inclusion training to management best practices. Having conducted multiple high-profile investigations, Katharine also serves as a third party, neutral investigator into sensitive discrimination, harassment and retaliation complaints.

Katharine also regularly helps clients navigate audits and investigations by, and defends clients in proceedings before, the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, Public Employment Relations Board, California Division of Labor Enforcement Standards, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, New York Department of Labor, New York Human Rights Commission and US Department of Labor.

Katharine speaks Mandarin and regularly advises international clients seeking to do business in the US on relevant employment issues.

Katharine has done pro bono work for the Clinton Foundation, Freedom Reads, the Clooney Foundation, Communities in Schools of Los Angeles (CISLA), Community Coalition for Substance Abuse, Hollaback! Harassment: Know Your Rights, Leadership Council on Diversity and Feeding America. She served as an adjunct professor at University of Southern California, teaching trial advocacy from 2010-2012.

Experience

- Representation of a large healthcare system (including six hospital campuses and six family health centers) in Department of Labor audit of wage and hour practices, in which we were able to significantly narrow the scope of the audit before successfully resolving the matter.
- Representation of a global medical technology corporation serving the healthcare industry in a non-compete litigation case against a former high-level executive, in which we prevailed in obtaining a temporary injunction and the executive was enjoined from working with a competitor.
- Representation of the world's largest sports and entertainment agency in matter of first impression in California involving fee-shifting obligations in sports agents' contracts.
- Representation of national provider of medical technology and services in a seven-day California state court jury trial related to claims brought by a former employee for disability discrimination, age discrimination, failure to accommodate, failure to engage in the interactive process and retaliation.
- Representation of a national athletic apparel company in a nationwide class action involving hourly, nonexempt employees claiming failure to pay wages, including overtime, missed meal breaks, missed rest breaks and failure to provide expense reimbursement under federal and state laws.
- Representation of national QSR in a large state-wide class action involving claims by nonexempt managers claiming missed meal periods, business expense reimbursements, wage statement claims, labor code penalties and unfair competition.
- Representation of a multinational software and information technology business in a trade secret, non-compete and unfair competition action against a former sales employee and competing company.
- Representation of a chain of US department stores in an exempt/nonexempt misclassification class action with claims of failure to pay wages, failure to provide meal and rest periods, failure to pay overtime and California derivative claims.
- Representation of a national retailer operating a chain of newsstands, bookstores, fast food restaurants and other retail stores chiefly at airports in a federal class action claiming misclassification of managers throughout the US.
- Representation of a trucking company in a wage and hour class action involving alleged overtime violations under the Fair Labor Standards Act and New York Labor Law.
- Representation of a music cable network in a wage and hour audit and investigation by New York Department of Labor, and multi-plaintiff reverse racism claims.
- Representation of an entertainment conglomerate in multi-plaintiff reverse race discrimination claims.

Credentials

Education

- Boston University School of Law, J.D., 2007
- University of Southern California, B.A., 2004

Admissions

- New York
- California

Courts

- U.S. Dist. Ct., C. Dist. of California
- U.S. Dist. Ct., S. Dist. of California
- U.S. Dist. Ct., N. Dist. of California
- U.S. Dist. Ct., E. Dist. of California
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit
- U.S. Dist. Ct., S. Dist. of New York
- U.S. Dist. Ct., E. Dist. of New York

Expertise

Services

- Labor & Employment

About our firm

One of the world's strongest integrated law firms, providing insight at the point where law, business and government meet. We deliver commercially focused business solutions by combining our legal, lobbying and political capabilities and invaluable connections on the ground to a diverse mix of clients, from long-established leading corporations to emerging businesses, startup visionaries and sovereign nations. More than 1,500 lawyers in over 40 offices across four continents provide unrivaled access to expertise.