



Robbins Schwartz
One Team. Making Your Mission Ours.

School Administrators' Conference

October 8, 2025

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Robbins Schwartz
One Team. Making Your Mission Ours.

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Schedule-at-a-Glance

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	REGISTRATION/BREAKFAST
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	GENERAL SESSION An Uncertain Future: Continued Shifts in the Interpretation and Enforcement of Federal Laws <i>Presented by: Joseph J. Perkoski and Caroline A. Roselli</i>
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Break / Switch Rooms
	PLEASE SELECT ONE TOPIC TO ATTEND
10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Session 1 The Laws, They Are a-Changin’: Updates for the School HR Office <i>Presented by: Catherine R. Locallo and Matthew M. Swift</i> From Classroom to Courtroom: Lessons from Recent Disability Discrimination Cases <i>Presented by: Laura M. Sinars and Jessica T. Carbonaro</i> Construction Case Study Part 1: Laying the Foundation – Strategic Planning, Risk Management, and Legal Readiness Before Breaking Ground <i>Presented by: Howard A. Metz, Christopher R. Gorman, and Danielle B. McNamara</i>
11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Break / Switch Rooms
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Session 2 Teacher Evaluation Process: Refresher on Legal Requirements and Best Practices to Ensure Compliance <i>Presented by: Thomas C. Garretson and Aaron J. Kacel</i> Construction Case Study Part 2: Building Beyond the Blueprint – Oversight, Dispute Management, and Legal Remedies Through Project Completion <i>Presented by: Kenneth M. Florey and Matthew J. Gardner</i> Lunch 1
12:30 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.	Break / Switch Rooms
12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.	Session 3 Tricky Parent Scenarios, Student Surprises, and the Unexpected: How to Handle Questions and Concerns Arising in Student Matters <i>Presented by: Zaria N. Udeh, Hannah M. May, and Anne L. Blackburn</i> Lunch 2
1:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Break / Switch Rooms
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Session 4 Striking the Balance: Fair and Effective Employee Discipline <i>Presented by: Kevin P. Noll and Elizabeth J. Becker</i> Navigating Nuance: Supporting Confidentiality in Sensitive Situations <i>Presented by: Michelle L. Weber and Claire E. Bufalino</i> Looking Ahead: Protecting School Revenue in a Shifting Property Tax Landscape <i>Presented by: Scott L. Ginsburg and Katie DiPiero</i>

General Session | 8:30 a.m.

An Uncertain Future: Continued Shifts in the Interpretation and Enforcement of Federal Laws

Since January 2025, school districts around the country have experienced seismic shifts in federal education policy. Through executive orders, new federal guidance, OCR and DOE investigations, and Supreme Court decisions, the legal and policy changes seem to occur almost daily, leaving school districts scrambling to remain in compliance with the current application of relevant laws. This presentation will explore an overview of where we are with the head-spinning level of changes in how federal agencies are applying laws applicable to school districts, how school districts can navigate the potential conflict with Illinois laws, and provide practical tips for assessing risk and remaining in compliance.

Presenters:

[Joseph J. Perkoski](#), Managing Partner and [Caroline A. Roselli](#), Partner

Session 1 | 10:15 a.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

The Laws, They Are a-Changin’: Updates for the School HR Office

This presentation will address recent and rapidly approaching statutory updates that are relevant to school administrators who manage labor and employment issues. Attendees will learn about new Illinois legislation, including expanded leave rights, options for teacher evaluation plans, and wage and hour requirements, with a few reminders about recent changes and best practices.

Presenters:

[Catherine R. Locallo](#), Partner and [Matthew M. Swift](#), Associate

From Classroom to Courtroom: Lessons from Recent Disability Discrimination Cases

This session takes an in-depth look at recent and emerging legal developments in disability discrimination, using real-world cases to highlight key lessons for educators and administrators. Through case analysis, participants will gain critical insights into developing legal trends and leave with practical strategies to ensure ongoing compliance in an evolving landscape.

Presenters:

[Laura M. Sinars](#), Partner and [Jessica T. Carbonaro](#), Associate

Construction Case Study Part 1: Laying the Foundation – Strategic Planning, Risk Management, and Legal Readiness Before Breaking Ground

Our Commercial, Construction, and Real Estate Practice Group will present the first part of a case study on effective planning, risk management, and compliance with respect to major school construction projects. The first part of the case study will focus on the initial phases of construction—from selecting your construction team and construction delivery system to best practices in competitive bidding, risk management, and other pre-construction responsibilities. The first part of the case study will conclude with ensuring that the most important legal considerations for a shovel ready project have been addressed.

Presenters:

[Christopher R. Gorman](#), Partner, [Howard A. Metz](#), Partner and [Danielle B. McNamara](#), Associate

Session 2 | 11:30 a.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

Teacher Evaluation Process: Refresher on Legal Requirements and Best Practices to Ensure Compliance

This session will provide an update on the impact of the elimination of the student growth requirement from the Performance Evaluation Reform Act, as well as a refresher on the teacher evaluation process and associated requirements. The session will also provide best practices to ensure compliance with this vital (and complicated) component of school administration.

Presenters:

[Thomas C. Garretson](#), Partner and [Aaron J. Kacel](#), Associate

Construction Case Study Part 2: Building Beyond the Blueprint – Oversight, Dispute Management, and Legal Remedies Through Project Completion

Our Commercial, Construction, and Real Estate Practice Group will conclude their case study by addressing issues that arise after construction starts. This includes the district's role in construction administration, how to handle disputes during construction, and when to issue warnings and takeover projects. The case study will conclude with an overview of how to leverage formal dispute resolution to successfully pursue remedies for construction defaults and defects.

Presenters:

[Christopher R. Gorman](#), Partner and [Kenneth M. Florey](#), Partner

Session 3 | 12:45 p.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

Tricky Parent Scenarios, Student Surprises, and the Unexpected: How to Handle Questions and Concerns Arising in Student Matters

Join us for an interactive jeopardy-style presentation where we will review a variety of questions and scenarios that can create legal pitfalls related to areas impacting students. From discipline, residency, records, and other student-related matters that arise in the school year, we will review best practices in handling unexpected requests and nuanced circumstances while providing tips for maintaining legal compliance and/or minimizing any potential liabilities.

Presenters:

[Zaria N. Udeh](#), Partner, [Hannah M. May](#), Associate, and [Anne L. Blackbourn](#), Associate

Session 4 | 2:00 p.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

Striking the Balance: Fair and Effective Employee Discipline

This presentation addresses key considerations for issuing discipline to district employees. Attendees will learn the benefits of progressive discipline and develop strategies for remediating problematic workplace behavior.

Presenters:

[Kevin P. Noll](#), Partner and [Elizabeth J. Becker](#), Associate

Navigating Nuance: Supporting Confidentiality in Sensitive Situations

Supporting students who are coping with highly sensitive matters is an evolving challenge for school staff, who must maintain trust with the students while also keeping them safe and meeting legal obligations. This presentation will delve into complex student confidentiality issues, focusing on how to address highly sensitive situations, such as disclosures involving risk of self-harm, pregnancy, and gender identity/transition. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of student confidentiality laws, including when disclosure is required versus permitted under the law. The presentation will also offer proactive strategies for reporting sensitive information while upholding legal and ethical responsibilities and maintaining student trust.

Presenters:

[Michelle L. Weber](#), Partner and [Claire E. Bufalino](#), Associate

Looking Ahead: Protecting School Revenue in a Shifting Property Tax Landscape

This session will explore updates and forward-looking strategies school districts can adopt to protect, stabilize and expand their property tax base. Topics will include refund recapture after five years and how intervention can support tax base defense; tools for evaluating and challenging questionable exemptions; and the use of the abuse of discretion standard to effectively respond to excessive accumulation objections and the *Miller* ratio.

Presenters:

[Scott L. Ginsburg](#), Partner and [Katie DiPiero](#), Associate

Biographies



JOSEPH J. PERKOSKI

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
Education
Employee Benefits
Labor & Employment
Litigation
Municipal
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., The Ohio State
University, The Mortiz
College of Law

M.A., The Ohio State
University

B.A., *with honors*, The
Ohio State University

Joseph J. Perkoski has devoted his 30-year legal career to representing educational institutions and public sector employers primarily in the areas of labor and employment law, as well as public board and executive leadership matters. Known for his experience in labor and employment issues, including collective bargaining, grievance arbitration, and contract interpretation, Joseph is a trusted counselor to his clients.

While an effective advocate in any adversarial proceeding, Joseph finds immense satisfaction in counseling clients to help them achieve their goals and objectives. His strengths as an attorney lie in understanding his clients' objectives and helping them achieve their goals. As a first-generation college graduate and lawyer, Joseph's choice to specialize in education law is rooted in his strong belief in the fundamental importance of education in the overall success of our society.

Joseph's excellence in his field is underscored by prestigious accolades, including being recognized as a Fellow of The College of Labor & Employment Lawyers and consistently listed in Illinois Super Lawyers annually from 2008 through the present. He has also been named an Illinois Leading Lawyer in Employment, Labor, and School Law. Joseph's contributions to his field extend beyond his legal counsel role to include his leadership role as Managing Partner of Robbins Schwartz. Through his leadership, Robbins Schwartz has become the largest and most talented education law firm in Illinois.

Awards

Fellow, The College of the Labor & Employment Lawyers
Illinois Super Lawyers, 2008-2026
Illinois Leading Lawyer, Employment, Labor and School Law

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Bargaining Implications of Statutory Leave Rights for Public Sector Employees," State and Local Government Bargaining & Employment Law Committee Midwinter Meeting, American Bar Association (2024)

Contributing author, "Labor Issues in the Transactional Side of the Project," Construction Law: Transactional Considerations, IICLE (2017)

Contributing author, "Labor Relations: Contract Administration Including ULPs," Illinois School Law: Personnel and Student Issues, IICLE (2010, 2012, and 2015)



ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin

U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin

Supreme Court of Illinois

Supreme Court of Wisconsin

Superior Court for the District of Columbia

ORGANIZATIONS

American Bar Association

Fellow, College of Labor and Employment Lawyers

Council of School Attorneys

Federal Bar Association

Illinois Association of School Business Officials

Illinois Bar Association

National School Boards Association

Wisconsin Bar Association

“Finding a New Way: Subcontracting Revisited,” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2011)

Contributing author, “Labor Issues in the Transactional Side of the Project,” *Construction Law – Transaction Practice*, IICLE (2010)

Recent Presentations

Please Proceed in an Orderly Fashion: Responding (or not) to Executive Orders, ED-RED Member Meeting (February 2025)

Which Hat Am I Wearing? Board Member Conundrums, IASB / IASA / IASBO Joint Annual Conference (November 2024)

What Anti-Woke Laws Have Meant for Public Employees and Their Representatives, ABA 18th Annual Section of Labor and Employment Law Conference (November 2024)

The Nuts and Bolts of Employee Sexual Misconduct and Grooming Investigations, Large Unit District Association January 2024 Conference (January 2024)

Legal Update, Illinois Community College Chief Financial Officers Spring Conference (April 2022)





CAROLINE A. ROSELLI

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PRACTICE AREAS

Education
Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., *cum laude*, Loyola
University Chicago
School of Law

B.A., University of
Notre Dame

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of the
United States

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Caroline A. Roselli is a dedicated attorney specializing in education law, higher education, special education, and student rights related issues. Her unwavering commitment is to ensure educational institutions receive the support, advocacy and collaboration they require to deliver quality education to students throughout their programs.

In her practice, Caroline provides invaluable counsel to K-12 school districts and higher education institutions on a broad spectrum of student-related matters. This includes advising on Title IX, discrimination, free speech, student discipline, student records, and related policy development. Caroline's expertise also extends to representation of schools in responding to complaints filed with regulatory bodies such as the Illinois State Board of Education, the Office of Civil Rights and the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

One of the areas where Caroline excels is representing public school districts at various critical special education proceedings. These include Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, due process hearings, and alternative dispute proceedings, such as mediations and resolution sessions. Her track record is notable for successfully defending school district decisions and prevailing at due process hearings, particularly on issues related to eligibility, residential placements, transition programming and denial of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) claims. Her work on disability related claims extends to representation of higher education institutions on accommodation requests and discrimination complaints.

Caroline also performs extensive work with educational institutions to ensure compliance with Title IX and related laws in all aspects of employment and education, including admissions, academic programs, athletics and extracurricular access, and facilities access. Caroline also works with educational institutions to ensure Title IX compliance in light of the changing regulations.

Caroline's commitment to the field is further highlighted by her active involvement in the education community. She is a member of the Illinois Counsel for School Attorneys Executive Committee and has been a speaker at annual conferences for both the Illinois Association for School Boards and the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education. She is also the author and co-author of multiple publications, contributing her expertise to the legal education of her peers and the broader community.



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Bar Association

Illinois Council of School Attorneys

National School Attorneys Association

Caroline frequently conducts workshops and in-service programs on various education related topics. Her dedication to educating others within the field demonstrates her passion for promoting a comprehensive understanding of the legal issues facing education institutions.

Caroline grew up in a supportive environment that emphasized the value of education and community service. Her mother, a dedicated teacher, instilled in her a love for learning and a commitment to helping others. Meanwhile, her father served as a school board member and attorney, which further highlighted the importance of education policy and advocacy in their household. This background not only shaped Caroline's academic pursuits but also inspired her to engage actively in her community, fostering a passion for both teaching and leadership.

Awards

Illinois Leading Lawyers, School Law

Illinois Emerging Lawyer, School Law (2017-2018)

Illinois "Rising Star," Super Lawyers Magazine, Schools and Education Law (2012-2017)

Recent Publications

Co-Author, "Special Education," 2024 Edition School Law Personnel and Student Issues, *Illinois Institute of Continuing Legal Education*

Recent Presentations

Anxiety and School Refusal Post COVID: Constructing the Path Back to School, Large Unit District Association 2025 February Conference (February 2025)

ABCs, FAQs, and More on Three Bills about Bullying, Racism, and Tenure, ED-RED Member Meeting (September 2024)

Hot Topics in Special Education Law, Loyola University Chicago School of Law Education Law: A Year in Review Seminar (June 2024)

Transition Programming: Preparing Students with Disabilities for Life After High School, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education 2024 Winter Conference (February 2024)

Accommodating the High Achieving Student: Where to Draw the Line under 504, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education 2023 Fall Conference (October 2023)

Navigating the IEP Process when DCFS is Involved, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education 2023 Winter Conference (February 2023)





KENNETH M. FLOREY

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PRACTICE AREAS

Arbitration/Mediation
Commercial Law
Construction Law
Education Law
Energy Law
Litigation
Mediation
Municipal Law
Public Finance &
Taxation
Real Estate
Development
Zoning, Planning &
Land Use

EDUCATION

J.D., DePaul University
College of Law;
Managing Editor,
DePaul Journal of Art
and Entertainment Law

B.A., University of
Illinois at Urbana
Champaign

Ken Florey concentrates his practice representing public and private clients, including municipalities, school districts, community colleges, townships, libraries, private owners, contractors and design professionals regarding land use, municipal law, construction, tax, finance and litigation. Ken has also started offering his services as a mediator with an emphasis on construction disputes.

Ken was the Chair of the DuPage County Bar Association's Local Government Committee. He was appointed Special Assistant Attorney General to prosecute and defend construction litigation claims on behalf of the Illinois Capital Development Board. Ken is also a member of the Illinois ASBO Service Associate Advisory Committee. He served as a Trustee for the Village of Lombard for eight years and is a member of the Lombard Fire and Police Commission.

Mediator Certificate: Northwestern University 2017

Awards

Illinois Leading Lawyer, Construction Law; Governmental, Municipal, Lobbying & Administrative Law; Land Use, Zoning & Condemnation Law; and School Law

Illinois Association of School Business Officials, Above and Beyond Award

Illinois Institute for Local Government Law, Litigation Award

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Competency in ADR: Assuring Ethical Practice through Competency and Communication," *DCBA Brief*, The Journal of the DuPage County Bar Association (2024)

Contributing author, "Navigating Construction Disputes: The inevitable construction disputes can be navigated with a combination of knowledge, preparation, and outside guidance," *School Business Affairs* (November 2023)

Contributing author, "Diving into ADR Ethics: Exploring the Ethical Obligation of Attorneys as Advisors, Advocates, and Third-Party Neutrals," *DCBA Brief* (November 2023)

Contributing author, "Joint Purchasing Everything You Want to Know but Are Afraid to Ask!" *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2019)



ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of Illinois

Contributing author, “How Far Does the Law Allow Schools to Go?” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2018)

Contributing author, “Top 11 Public Bidding Questions & Solutions” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2018)

Co-author, “School Construction from Start to Finish: A Project Checklist,” *School Business Affairs Magazine*, ASBO (2018)

Contributing author, “Top 11 Public Bidding Questions,” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2018)

Contributing author, “Top 11 Public Bidding Questions,” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2018)

Contributing author, “Meditation a Win-Win for Clients and their Attorneys in Construction Litigation,” *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (2018)

Recent Presentations

Construction 101: Understanding Money from Start to Finish, Illinois ASBO Rising Leaders in School Business (July 2025)

Mastering the Complex World of Public Bidding, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (April 2025)

Eminent Domain – Key Challenges; Advanced Development Agreement Drafting Techniques; and Legal Ethics, National Business Institute National Seminar (February 2025)

Taking Action: Administration Red Flags During Construction, IASB/IASA/IASBO Joint Annual Conference (November 2024)

Contract Pitfalls to Avoid, Emerging SBO Summit (July 2024)

Building Better Bid and RFP Documents, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (April 2024)

Alternative Dispute Resolution Section MCLE Program, DuPage County Bar Association (February 2023)





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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial
Transactions
Construction
Public Finance &
Taxation
Real Estate
Development

EDUCATION

J.D., University of
Wisconsin Law School

B.A., University of
Utah

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Supreme Court of Utah

Supreme Court of
Wisconsin

Matthew J. Gardner is a partner at Robbins Schwartz, where he specializes in construction, commercial transactions, real estate, public finance, and board governance. Matt represents public and private project owners, contractors, subcontractors, and material suppliers over the course of construction projects. He regularly counsels clients through the public bid and procurement process, including drafting bid packets to comply with the assortment of laws impacting public project owners. He also drafts and negotiates a variety of construction contracts involving project owners, architects and design professionals, contractors and construction managers, and project general conditions. Additionally, Matt works with project owners throughout the project to quickly resolve any problems or conflicts that often arise on construction projects to help the project continue smoothly without delays or cost overruns. If a project does go wrong, Matt regularly represents clients on mechanics lien matters, construct defect cases, and other construction-related litigation.

Matt's commercial real estate practice involves representing public and private clients in a wide variety of real estate and land use matters. He represents clients throughout the purchase or sale of property, from drafting and negotiating a purchase and sale agreement, due diligence review of lease, environmental, and title matters, zoning, and ultimately through closing. Throughout the process, Matt seeks to ensure a smooth closing to fulfill the parties' desired goals, while at the same time keeping his client fully informed of any nuances and risks, and making sure his client's interests are protected. Matt also represents clients on commercial and education-related leases, large and small, and other land use issues such as licenses and easements, zoning, impact fees, or title disputes.

In addition to construction and real estate, Matt represents school districts, colleges, and private companies on a wide assortment of commercial transactions, including drafting and negotiating data privacy agreements, software license agreements, and service agreements. As educational technology and artificial technology tools and products become more prevalent, Matt frequently presents on student privacy-related issues and compliance with the litany of laws and regulations impacting the same. He also counsels and helps clients navigate and respond to data breaches or ransomware attacks if they occur.

Beyond his practice, Matt is actively involved in the legal community. He has served as the past Chair of the Chicago Bar Association Construction Law and Mechanics lien Subcommittee, is an active member of the Chicago Bar Association Judicial Evaluation Committee, and a member of the Illinois State Bar Association.



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

Illinois State Bar
Association

Illinois Council of School
Attorneys

Awards

Illinois “Rising Star”, by Super Lawyers Magazine, in the area of Construction Litigation (2021-2022)

Recent Publications

Contributing author, “Environmental Issues” *Construction Law: Transactional Considerations*, IICLE (2021)

Contributing author, “School Property and Environmental Issues” *School Law: Organization, Finance, and Property*, IICLE (2017, 2021)

Contributing author, “Turner on Illinois Mechanics Liens,” *Chapter III – Making a Lien Against Private Property Enforceable* (2019)

Recent Presentations

Ed Tech Contracts in 2025: Industry-Wide Acceptance of the NDPA, Evolving AI Technologies, and Risks and Best Practices that School Attorneys Should Consider, ICSA In-House Counsel Networking Meeting (May 2025)

Bridging SOPPA and NDPA: Key Changes to Student Data Agreements in Illinois, SecurED Schools K-12 Data Privacy & Cybersecurity Conference (January 2025)

Construction Project Delivery Methods, IASB/IASA/IASBO 2024 Joint Annual Conference (November 2024)

Sustainable Design: Procurement and Other Considerations for a Successful Project, Illinois ASBO 2024 Annual Conference (April 2024)

Data Breaches and Ransomware Attacks: Strategies for Preventing and Responding to Cybersecurity Incident, LUDA 2024 March Conference (March 2024)

Bidding and Managing a Successful Construction Project, 2024 IADP/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2024)

Best Practices When Responding to a Data Breach or Cyber Incident, Secured Schools: K-12 Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Conference (January 2024)

Legal Requirements Schools Must Consider for Data Privacy and an Update on the Evolution of Lawsuits Against Schools Arising From Data Breaches, Secured Schools: K-12 Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Conference (January 2024)





THOMAS C. GARRETSON

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PRACTICE AREAS

Employee Benefits
Labor & Employment
Municipal

EDUCATION

J.D., Chicago-Kent
College of Law

B.A., *with honors*,
Michigan State University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for the
Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of Illinois

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Tom advises and counsels employers in the public and private sectors in all areas of labor and employment law, including workplace investigations, disciplinary action, leaves and accommodation requests, contract disputes, wage and hour issues, and general human resources compliance. Tom has significant experience working closely with management in traditional labor matters, including union organizing, collective bargaining and contract negotiations, grievances, and unfair labor practices. Tom also defends employers in state/federal court and before administrative agencies involving claims of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and breach of contract.

Prior to joining Robbins Schwartz, Tom worked as a labor relations attorney for the Cook County Health System. Tom also worked with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Enforcement Unit while in law school.

Outside of Robbins Schwartz, Tom is a die-hard sports fan and, despite living in Chicago for over a decade, his heart still belongs to his hometown Detroit teams as well as the Michigan State Spartans.

Recent Publications

"New Supervisors, Take Caution: Seventh Circuit Concludes Sudden Changes from New Management Could Constitute Age Discrimination," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2024)

"Illinois Employers Take Note: Expanded Bereavement Leave Requirements Now in Effect," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2024)

"IDOL Publishes Proposed Rules for the Illinois Paid Leave for All Workers Act," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

"Illinois Employers Required to Provide Transportation Benefits Starting in 2024," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

"Mandatory Paid Leave for Employees Coming to Illinois in 2024," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

"Illinois Supreme Court – Federal Labor Law Preempts BIPA Claims Brought by Union Employees," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)



“Illinois Imposes New Pay Transparency Requirements on Employers,”
Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints, IICLE (2023)

“Illinois Department of Labor Adopts New Expense Reimbursement Rules for Employers,” *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

Recent Presentations

FMLA 101, Illinois ASBO Rising Leaders in School Business (July 2025)

The Continuing Impact of Executive Orders, Superintendent Commissions' Summer Leadership Conference (June 2025)

FMLA 101 & 201, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (May 2025)

Tenured Teacher Dismissals in Illinois Public Schools, 40th Annual Illinois Public Sector Labor Relations & Labor Law Conference (December 2024)

Navigating Payroll Laws, Illinois ASBO Bookkeepers Conference (March 2024)

Collective Bargaining Overview and Tips for Negotiations, Community College Trustee Professional Development Training, ICCTA Annual Conference (June 2023)

Navigating Payroll Laws – Wages and Recordkeeping Requirements, Illinois ASBO Bookkeepers Conference (March 2023)

Best Practices for Responding to Harassment and Discrimination Complaints, IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2023)





SCOTT L. GINSBURG

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial
Transactions
Education
Energy
Litigation
Municipal
Public Finance &
Taxation
Real Estate
Zoning, Planning &
Land Use

EDUCATION

J.D., Washington
University School of
Law

B.A., DePauw
University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Scott L. Ginsburg is chair of the firm's Real Estate and Finance Practice Group with a focus on matters related to public finance and property taxation. Scott's experience includes counseling clients and litigating cases in the areas of local government finance, real estate taxation, tax rate objections, tax exemptions, sale and use tax, energy, TIF and property tax abatements. As a registered lobbyist and longtime member of the State and Local Taxation ("SALT") Section Council of the Illinois Bar Association, Scott monitors and drafts legislation involving matters of public finance, and he has testified on behalf of Illinois units of local government in matters before the Illinois General Assembly. Scott has tried multiple cases before the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board and the Illinois Department of Revenue, and his litigation experience includes defense of actions before courts of all levels. Scott also practices in the area of commercial transactions and local government, including contract drafting and review, litigation and alternative dispute resolution. He has experience in representing general contractors, local governments, and business owners in all aspects of civil litigation.

Prior to joining Robbins Schwartz, Scott concentrated his practice on litigation, in the areas of commercial disputes, construction defects and labor and employment issues. Scott is also a former judicial extern to the Honorable Michael J. Reagan, United States District Judge, Southern District of Illinois.

From the very beginning, Scott's passion for education law was evident. He recognized the transformative power of education and was drawn to the field as a way to contribute positively to this noble endeavor. As the child of educators - both of his parents and a sister dedicated their lives to teaching - Scott's career in education law became an apt reflection of his family's commitment to learning and knowledge.

What Scott finds most fulfilling in his professional life is helping taxing districts find innovative and creative solutions to address financial issues. It is in these challenging situations that his skills truly shine, as he harnesses his expertise to guide clients toward effective resolutions. The ability to apply creative thinking to solve intricate financial problems has become a hallmark of his career.



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

Illinois State Bar
Association, State and
Local Taxation Section
Council, Member

Rogers Park Montessori
School, Board of Directors

Outside of his professional life, Scott's interests and passions are just as diverse. He finds solace running along the serene lakefront, a practice that not only keeps him physically active but also clears his mind. His love for literature shines through in his joy for reading books about history and science, allowing him to delve into the complexities of the past and the wonders of the natural world. And then, there's his unwavering curiosity about the world, which is evident in his love for travel, a means through which he explores new horizons and experiences the beauty of different cultures.

Recent Publications

Co-Author, "Appellate Court Decision Clarifies Notice Standards for Property Tax Assessments in Illinois," *Tax Trends*, Illinois State Bar Association (July 2024)

"PTAB Clarifies Uniformity Standards for Income Properties," *Tax Trends*, Illinois State Bar Association, (2015)

"Chicago Bears Football Club v. The Cook County Department of Revenue," *Tax Trends*, Illinois State Bar Association (2014)

Contributing author, "Illinois Supreme Court Clarifies Standard Review for Zoning Decisions," *Illinois Municipal Review* (2008)

Recent Presentations

Comments on PTELL Legislation, ED-RED's Member Meeting (April 2022)





CHRISTOPHER R. GORMAN

Partner, Chicago & Lisle

312.332.7760

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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial
Transactions
Construction
Labor & Employment
Litigation
Municipal
Real Estate

EDUCATION

J.D., University of
Minnesota Law School

B.A., *Presidential
Scholar*, University of
Minnesota - Twin Cities

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Christopher R. Gorman practices in the firm's commercial, construction, and real estate practice groups, representing public sector clients in commercial transactions, contracting, construction related transactional matters, and data & privacy law. Christopher has also served in the firm's labor and employment practice group and counseled employers in all aspects of labor and employment law, including labor relations, collective bargaining, grievance and dispute resolution, workplace investigation, employee discipline, terminations and reductions in force, and employment discrimination. Christopher also advises clients on board governance and compliance with the Illinois Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

Christopher's strengths as an attorney are evident in his approach to law. He brings a unique perspective to the table, given his background as in-house counsel for not-for-profit organizations and public bodies as well as his comprehensive understanding of various practice areas. He values ethical principles and understands the significance of alternative dispute resolution when it aligns with his clients' best interests.

In his legal practice, Christopher finds the most joy in representing individuals who are deeply committed to their roles in public service, recognizing the significance of their contributions. This alignment of values and a shared commitment to public service underscores the core of his legal practice.

Christopher's decision to become a lawyer was deeply rooted in his passion for government and public service. Prior to joining Robbins Schwartz, Christopher served as in-house counsel for a nonprofit organization, a charter school management organization and a state regulatory agency overseeing higher education financing. In his career, Christopher has overseen labor relations for the first unionized charter school in the country, assisted in the development of state legislation and administrative rules, and influenced the U.S. and Treasury Department's decision to reintroduce the U.S. Savings Bond as a form of tax refund, promoting savings among low-income families.

Christopher's contributions extend beyond the courtroom. He has authored numerous publications, addressing critical legal issues and serving as a valuable resource for the legal community. He has also been a prominent figure in legal presentations, sharing his insights with fellow professionals.



ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois State Bar
Association

DuPage County Bar
Association

Illinois Local Government
Lawyers Association

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

Beyond his legal career, Christopher is a devoted coach for his children's sports activities when given the opportunity. He finds solace in the great outdoors, enjoys cooking, and maintains a commitment to regular exercise. Moreover, he possesses a deep interest in change management and organizational design, which he's cultivated through certification courses.

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Labor Issues in the Transactional Side of the Project," *Construction Law: Transactional Considerations 2021 Edition* (IICLE, 2021, 2025)

Contributing author, "Labor Relations: Contract Administration Including Unfair Labor Practices," *Illinois School Law* (IICLE, 2024)

Contributing author, "Competency in ADR: Assuring Ethical Practice through Competency and Communication," *DCBA Brief*, The Journal of the DuPage County Bar Association (2024)

Contributing author, "School District Emergency Purchasing," *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2024)

Contributing author, "Diving into ADR Ethics: Exploring the Ethical Obligations of Attorneys as Advisors, Advocates, and Third-Party Neutrals" *DCBA Brief*, The Journal of the DuPage County Bar Association (2023)

"Navigating Public Bidding Requirements under the Illinois School Code," *Update*, Illinois ASBO (2022)

"Continuing Controversy Over FCC's Efforts to Improve Broadband Connectivity," *Energy, Utilities, Telecommunications and Transportation Newsletter*, Illinois State Bar Association (2021)

"The Future of For-Profit Online Charter Schools," *Labor and Employment Law Quarterly*, American Bar Association (2016)

Recent Presentations

Community College Legal Updates, Illinois Community College Chief Financial Officers Conference (April 2025, October 2024, April 2024)

Best Practices for Safeguarding Data in an Increasingly Digital World, SecurED Schools: K-12 Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Conference (January 2023)

School Bidding, Procurement, and Prevailing Wages: From the Basics to the Advanced, IASA Spring Legal Seminar (March 2022)

Making Sense of the Alphabet Soup: FERPA, COPPA, SOPPA, ISSRA, MHDDCA and PIPA, The Learning Technology Center of Illinois SecurED Schools Annual Conference (January 2022)





CATHERINE R. LOCALLO

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
Education
Labor & Employment

EDUCATION

J.D., *cum laude*, The
John Marshall Law
School, Order of John
Marshall

B.S., Southern Illinois
University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

U.S. Court of Appeals
for the Seventh Circuit

U.S. District Court for
the Central District of
Illinois

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Catherine R. Locallo, a distinguished legal professional, has devoted her career to the realms of labor and employment law, focusing on education and board governance matters. Her commitment is exemplified by her role as a counselor to employers, offering comprehensive guidance on employment law intricacies, collective bargaining, labor relations, and compliance with various acts, including the Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

Catherine's strengths lie in her client-focused approach, problem-solving skills, and the ability to build strong relationships. Her enjoyment stems from problem-solving and the opportunity to foster improved relations between management and labor.

Catherine's journey into law began with a significant role as a paralegal before transitioning to become an attorney. Her early career as a paralegal influenced her decision to pursue law, a path that led her to join Robbins Schwartz in 2004. She worked diligently while attending law school at night and was admitted to the bar in 2009. Catherine's dedication to education law led her to become a partner at Robbins Schwartz in 2017.

Catherine's upbringing, with her father as an attorney, has instilled a strong work ethic that influences her approach to the law. Beyond her legal endeavors, she is a hockey mom, team manager, and a Peloton enthusiast. A lesser-known fact about Catherine is her passion for running marathons, a tribute to her best friend Farrah, who passed away from Leukemia when she was seven years old.

Awards

Honorable Gerald L. Sbarbaro Mentoring Award (2023)

Illinois "Rising Star," Employment & Labor Law (2015-2018)

Recent Publications

"Post-Muldrov Decision Addresses Evaluations and PIPs as Adverse Employment Actions," *Employment & Labor Law*, IICLE (2025)

"Substantive Amendments to Whistleblower Act Signed into Law," *Employment & Labor Law*, IICLE (2024)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Council of School Attorneys

Illinois State Bar Association

National Council of School Attorneys

President, Justinian Society of Lawyers

Co-Chair, Justinian Society of Lawyers Endowment Fund Scholarship Committee

Member, Oakton Community College Paralegal Advisory Committee

Member, Triton College School of Business Advisory Legal Committee

President, Board of Directors, Glenview Stars Hockey Association

UNICO National

Contributing author, "Labor Relations: Contract Administration Including Unfair Labor Practices," *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2024)

"U.S. Supreme Court Resolves Circuit Split for Title VII Claim Related to Job Transfer," *Employment & Labor Law*, IICLE (2024)

"EEOC Releases Proposed Regulations for Pregnant Workers Fairness Act," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

Co-Author, "Seventh Circuit Addresses Employer Liability for Coworker and Supervisor Harassment and Challenges in Establishing Claims For Retaliation, Defamation, and IIED," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

Co-Author, "Seventh Circuit Addresses Employer Liability for Coworker and Supervisor Harassment and Challenges in Establishing Claims For Retaliation, Defamation, and IIED," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

"Each Discrete Statutory Violation of Biometric Information Privacy Act Is Actionable by Employees," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

"Illinois Employers Ring in New Year with Five New Laws," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2022)

Recent Presentations

Collective Bargaining 101, IASA Legal Seminar (March 2025)

Collective Bargaining Strategies and Trends, South Suburban School Business Officials (February 2025)

2024 Hot Topics in Labor & Employment Law, The Chicago Bar Association (February 2025)

Which Hat Am I Wearing? Board Member Conundrums, IASB/IASA/IASBO 2024 Joint Annual Conference (November 2024)

Legal, Legislative and Ethics Updates, ICCTA (November 2024)

Compliance with Illinois Sunshine Laws, FOIA and OMA Basic Compliance Webinar (September 2023)

2022 Hot Topics in Labor & Employment Law, The Chicago Bar Association (February 2023)





HOWARD A. METZ

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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial
Transactions
Construction
Education
Energy
Litigation
Municipal
Public Finance &
Taxation
Real Estate
Zoning, Planning &
Land Use

EDUCATION

J.D., IIT Chicago-Kent
College of Law

B.S., Political Science,
University of Iowa

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Howard A. Metz is an experienced legal professional known for his expertise in advising and representing various private and public entities, including school districts, community colleges, park districts, and municipalities. His legal practice spans a range of areas, with a primary focus on real estate, commercial transactions, construction law, and land use and zoning matters.

Howard has made significant contributions, particularly in resolving complex construction cases. His expertise includes handling disputes related to architectural fees, construction defects, bidding issues, and construction delays. Additionally, Howard has been actively involved in litigating matters pertaining to zoning laws and municipal control over school property.

Howard's legal practice is diverse and includes areas such as commercial law, construction law, education law, energy law, litigation, municipal law, public finance and taxation, real estate law, and zoning, planning, and land use.

As a prolific writer, Howard has contributed to various publications, sharing his insights on topics crucial to his practice.

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "School District Emergency Purchasing," *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2024)

"Navigating Public Bidding Under the Illinois School Code" *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO

Contributing author, "Joint Purchasing Everything You Want to Know but Are Afraid to Ask!" *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2019)

Contributing author, "Public Body Social Media Rules Make Retention, Read Retrieval Imperative," *Chicago Law Bulletin* (2019)

Contributing author, "How Far Does the Law Allow Schools to Go?" *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2018)

Co-author, "School Construction from Start to Finish: A Project Checklist," *School Business Affairs Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2018)



ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

Illinois Council of School
Attorneys

Contributing author, “Organization, Finance, and Property,” *Illinois School Law*, Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education (2017)

“Look Before You Leap: Evaluating Your Joint Purchasing Options,” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2016)

Contributing author, “School Property and Environmental Issues,” *Illinois School Law*, Illinois Institute for Continuing Education Legal Education (2010 and 2012)

Recent Presentations

Bidding 101, Illinois ASBO Rising Leaders in School Business (July 2025)

Building Better Bid and RFP Documents, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (April 2024)

Innovative Solutions to Student Transportation Challenges, Illinois ASBO School Business Essentials Lunch & Learn Series (January 2024)





KEVIN P. NOLL

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Education
Labor & Employment
Litigation

EDUCATION

J.D., The University of
Illinois Chicago School
of Law

B.A., Indiana
University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. Court of Appeals
for the Seventh Circuit

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Kevin P. Noll's practice focuses in the area of labor and employment law. Kevin counsels school districts, community colleges, libraries, park districts and municipalities with issues involving employee discipline, internal investigations, employee leaves of absences, and alleged discrimination and harassment claims. Kevin also defends clients in litigation and administrative charges in federal and state court, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, and the Illinois Department of Labor. In addition to his experience in labor and employment law, Kevin has trained school districts and community colleges pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972.

As an attorney, Kevin strives to cut through complexity to provide clients with practical answers and pragmatic solutions.

Beyond his legal work, Kevin's interests include golf and spending quality time with family and friends.

Awards

Illinois Emerging Lawyers

Illinois "Rising Star," by Super Lawyers Magazine

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Employee Discrimination," *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2021, 2024)

"OSHA Pauses Vaccination and Testing ETS Following Legal Challenges," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2021)

"NLRB Takes New Look at Charter Schools," *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (2019)

Recent Presentations

Calculating Overtime & FLSA Update, 2025 Illinois ASBO Bookkeepers Conference (March 2025)

Addressing Employee Mental Health Conditions, IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2025)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois State Bar
Association

LEADERSHIP

Higher Education Practice
Group Leader

Hiring Employees in an Age of New Regulations: Salary and other Job Posting Requirements, Application and Interview Do's and Don'ts, Background Screening Parameters, and More, IAPD Legal Symposium (November 2024)

Benefit or Burden: Navigating Ever-Expanding Employee Leave Rules, IAPD Legal Symposium (November 2023)

Managing Employee Leave Rights Under the FMLA, ADA, and Illinois Law, IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2023)

Best Practices for Responding to Harassment and Discrimination Complaints, IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2023)





LAURA M. SINARS

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Education
Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., University of
Notre Dame Law School

B.A., University of
Notre Dame

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. Court of Appeals
for the Seventh Circuit

U.S. District Court for
the Central District of
Illinois

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Laura Sinars focuses on special education and students' rights law. She counsels and represents public school districts at IEP meetings, due process hearings and mediation. She also represents districts at student expulsion and residency hearings. Laura has defended district decisions regarding evaluations, services, and placement of special education students in due process hearings. She has successfully prevailed in hearings to defend against parents' unilateral private placements. In the area of student rights, Laura has assisted clients with routine student issues related to records, discipline, health and 504 questions. She has also assisted clients with building strong residency and discipline cases which proceed to hearing and has successfully defended districts' decisions in state and federal courts. Laura has represented districts before federal and state agencies including the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission and the Office for Civil Rights.

Awards

Illinois Super Lawyers, 2005-2018

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Special Education," *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2005, 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2024)



ZARIA N. UDEH

Partner, Chicago

312.332.7760

zudeh@robbins-schwartz.com

PRACTICE AREAS

Education
Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., DePaul University
College of Law

B.A., Yale University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Supreme Court of the
Commonwealth of
Massachusetts

Zaria N. Udeh is a dedicated attorney who focuses her practice on education law, specifically in the intricacies of special education and student issues. Zaria is a trusted counselor for school districts, providing guidance on a broad spectrum of matters, from Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings and 504 accommodations to Office for Civil Rights, Illinois State Board of Education, and Illinois Department of Human Rights complaints. She adeptly navigates due process hearings, residency disputes, student discipline matters, and provides expertise in advising on policy and handbook review, first amendment issues, and student privacy and school records matters. Her expertise even extends to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion compliance.

In her role, Zaria finds joy in the dynamic nature of the work. She thrives on the challenges presented, helping educators and administrators to comply with the law and providing them with the legal tools they need to offer the highest quality educational experiences to students. Her strength as an attorney lies in her exceptional listening skills, problem-solving abilities, and her talent for presenting reasonable options to clients. Zaria's devotion to education and the legal aspects surrounding it has been the driving force behind her career choice. For her, there is immense satisfaction in supporting educational entities in fulfilling their missions. Her commitment to this sector has brought her into the dynamic field of education law.

Prior to joining Robbins Schwartz, Zaria's journey into the field of education law was paved by her role at Chicago Public Schools. There, she represented the district as a special education attorney, where she honed her skills in due process matters and special education disputes.

Zaria's roots in New England and her multicultural background have instilled in her the value of educational opportunities. She diligently works to support clients in extending these same opportunities to the students and families they serve.

Recent Publications

"Medical Cannabis at School Wins Legislative OK," Chicago Daily Law Bulletin (2018)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Council of School Attorneys

National Council of School Attorneys

Recent Presentations

Advancing Equity: The Equity Journey Continuum & IRC, Illinois Association of School Boards (June 2025)

Special Education Due Process Decisions: Recent Hearing Outcomes in Illinois and Lessons Learned, Illinois Association of School Administrators Legal Seminar (April 2025)

Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: Legalities of Special Education Transportation, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education 2025 Winter Conference (February 2025)

Where Are We Now? Student Behavior and Discipline in a Post-COVID World, LUDA 2025 February Conference (February 2025)

Best Practices in Addressing Bullying Complaints, LUDA 2025 Virtual Conference (January 2025)

Unique Parent Demands in Special Education: What We're Seeing and How We're Responding, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education 2024 Fall Conference (October 2024)

Unpacking the 2024 Title IX Regulations, Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity Summer Leadership Conference (June 2024)

How to Get Specific: Defensible SLD Eligibility, Goal Drafting & Instruction, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education 2024 Winter Conference (February 2024)

Gender Identity and Student Supports: What Board Members Need to Know, The Illinois Council of School Attorneys Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee Roundtable Webinar (September 2023)

Student and Employee Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives: Considerations for DEI Planning & DEI Legal Challenges, LUDA Winter Conference (March 2023)





MICHELLE L. WEBER

Partner, Chicago

312.332.7760

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PRACTICE AREAS

Education
Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., Loyola University
College of Law

M.A., Loyola Marymount
University

B.A., Trinity College

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for the
Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of Illinois

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Council of School
Attorneys

National Council of
School Attorneys

Board of Directors, North
Park Elementary School

Michelle L. Weber practices in education law, with a primary focus on special education and student matters. Michelle brings a wealth of experience to her role at Robbins Schwartz, representing educational institutions, including school districts, community colleges and private schools. Michelle works with clients on a wide range of student-related legal issues, including special education, student discipline, student records, free speech, and board policy development. Michelle is also a member of the firm's Freedom of Information Act and Title IX working groups and provides counsel to clients in these areas as well.

Michelle is passionate about education and her strengths lie in finding creative and practical solutions to complex legal issues. Prior to joining Robbins Schwartz, she served as an in-house attorney for Waukegan Public Schools and Chicago Public Schools, focusing on special education. Michelle began her career as a Teach for America Corps Member and middle school language arts teacher; an experience that significantly influenced her career trajectory. Drawing on her experience as a classroom teacher, Michelle offers clients a unique perspective, aiming to partner with them to achieve their goals while prioritizing the best interests of students.

Beyond her legal practice, Michelle actively contributes to the community. She serves on the Board of Directors of North Park Elementary School, expanding her commitment to education and experience in the field. Outside of her professional pursuits, Michelle enjoys running, yoga, hiking, and spending quality time with her family.

Recent Publications

"DeVos Rollbacks Could Hit Schools Hard," *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (2017)

Recent Presentations

Student Discipline and Trauma-Informed Practices for School Boards, Illinois State Board of Education Approved Professional Leadership Development Training (May 2023)

Navigating the IEP Process when DCFS is Involved, Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education (February 2023)





ELIZABETH J. BECKER

Associate, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
Education
Employee Benefits
Labor & Employment
Litigation
Municipal
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., Loyola University
Chicago School of Law

M.ED., University of
Southern California
Rossier School of
Education,
Postsecondary
Administration and
Student Affairs

B.A., University of
California, Davis

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Elizabeth J. Becker, an attorney at Robbins Schwartz specializing in Labor & Employment law, has built a career rooted in advocacy and education. Driven by a desire to support students and institutions more effectively, Elizabeth pursued a career in law. Her work allows her to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders, helping to bridge gaps in understanding and create environments conducive to growth and learning. Elizabeth's legal practice is marked by her proficiency in restorative justice and conflict resolution, particularly in contexts involving due process and associational rights.

Elizabeth's journey to law began with her work as a staff member in a congressional district office in California during a pivotal time when the Department of Education was intensifying its focus on Title IX, particularly in areas related to sexual assault harassment and prevention in higher education. This experience sparked her passion for advocacy and led her to pursue a Master's in Education focused on higher education at the University of Southern California.

At Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Elizabeth was an integral part of the community, serving as the Deans' Office Student Worker and a member of the Deans' Advisory Counsel. Her role as Managing Editor of the Loyola University Chicago Law Journal further honed her skills in facilitating important conversations about freedom of speech and academic freedom, all while supporting students during times of transition and crisis.

Her career in higher education took off as she worked for the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), where she advocated for students' associational rights and worked on relationship agreements between institutions and private social organizations. Elizabeth's expertise further expanded when she was selected for the Post-Graduate Internship Program with the NCAA. In this role, she contributed to the Enforcement staff, investigating bylaw violations and understanding the crucial role of governance structures in education.

Elizabeth's commitment to Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity remains strong as an alumna. She plays an active role in volunteer leadership, overseeing compliance with Fraternity policies and facilitating student leadership development programs both within Kappa Alpha Theta and through the National Panhellenic Conference.



ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois State Bar
Association. Member

Women's Bar Association
of Illinois, Member

Kappa Alpha Theta
Fraternity, College District
Director

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area during the rise of Silicon Valley, Elizabeth witnessed firsthand the transformative power of technology on education. This background has given her a deep appreciation for the diversity of perspectives that contribute to creating inclusive educational spaces.

Outside of her professional life, Elizabeth enjoys walking her dog, Milo, around Northwestern's campus, often accompanied by audiobooks or podcasts. She is an avid sports fan, cheering on teams like the SF Giants, SF 49ers, Golden State Warriors, Chicago Sky, Chicago Red Stars, and USC Trojans, while also keeping up with Formula One racing. Elizabeth is also passionate about language learning, with a special focus on German, where she has maintained an impressive 950-day streak on Duolingo.





ANNE L. BLACKBOURN

Associate, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., University of
Wisconsin Law School

B.A., University of
Wisconsin-Madison

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Wisconsin

ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois State Bar
Association

Wisconsin State Bar
Association

Anne L. Blackburn is an Associate at Robbins Schwartz, where she concentrates her practice on Special Education and Student Rights. She represents schools and educational institutions in navigating the complex legal and policy matters that arise in supporting students and ensuring compliance with education law. Anne is admitted to practice in both Illinois and Wisconsin and is an active member of the Illinois State Bar Association and the Wisconsin State Bar Association.

In her legal career, Anne is driven by the belief that education is a cornerstone of an informed and equitable society. She strives to protect the rights of students while guiding schools through evolving regulations and sensitive situations. Her work often involves complex problem-solving, close collaboration with administrators, and staying ahead of policy changes that affect the education sector.

Anne's path to education law began with a passion for understanding how institutions serve, and sometimes fail, their communities. While earning her degree at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, she worked as a student journalist covering campus policy, Title IX, and diversity initiatives. Those experiences gave her an inside look at the challenges administrators face and sparked a desire to move from reporting on these issues to being part of the team solving them.

Growing up in Wisconsin with a father who practiced law, Anne learned early the value of diligence, advocacy, and creativity in problem-solving, principles that continue to guide her practice.

Outside the office, Anne enjoys staying active through swimming and long walks, traveling to new places, and supporting the Wisconsin Badgers at sporting events.





CLAIRE E. BUFALINO

Associate, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

M.P.P., Loyola
University Chicago

J.D., Loyola University
Chicago

B.F.A., New York
University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Claire E. Bufalino is an attorney at Robbins Schwartz, focusing on Special Education and Student Rights. She counsels school districts regarding IDEA and Section 504, student discipline, Title IX, student records issues and policy development. She assists school districts in responding to complaints from the Office for Civil Rights, Office of the Attorney General and Illinois State Board of Education, and she represents public school districts at IEP meetings, due process hearings, mediations, student discipline hearings and residency hearings.

Before practicing law, Claire worked as a program analyst at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where she researched federal housing policy and worked in legislative and regulatory analysis and development. This role strengthened her ability to analyze complex legal and policy issues and reinforced her commitment to ensuring institutions have the knowledge and tools to stay compliant while supporting their communities.

Her interest in education law grew from early experiences working with children in nonprofits, music education, and childcare roles. Seeing how institutions shape opportunities, she pursued a legal career to support schools in creating equitable learning environments. In law school, she worked with students with disabilities in special education matters, which deepened her commitment to education law.

Outside of work, Claire is a dedicated runner who has completed the Chicago Marathon twice. She also enjoys exploring new restaurants across the city. A lesser-known fact about Claire is that she originally studied music, which shaped her understanding of how storytelling influences law, policy, and institutions.

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois State Bar
Association





JESSICA (JESSE) T. CARBONARO

Associate, Chicago

312.332.7760

jcarbonaro@robbins-schwartz.com

PRACTICE AREAS

Student Rights
Special Education

EDUCATION

J.D., University of
Illinois Chicago School
of Law

B.S., University of
Dayton

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Appellate Division of
the Supreme Court of
the State of New York
First Judicial
Department

Jessica (Jesse) T. Carbonaro is an Associate at Robbins Schwartz specializing in Student Rights and Special Education. Her dedication to education law is driven by her passion for education and her fascination with the field's ever-changing, complex landscape. Jesse's commitment to her clients makes her a compassionate advocate in the field. Growing up in the western suburbs of Chicago, she developed a strong desire to serve the greater Chicagoland area. Her ability to anticipate potential legal problems and creatively solve them is one of the aspects she enjoys most about her work. Jesse's love for legal research and writing is reflected in her concise yet thorough work product.

Before joining Robbins Schwartz, Jesse gained valuable experience as a special education attorney in New York and interned with the legal department of Chicago Public Schools. She earned her Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law, where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the UIC Law Review and was an active member of Moot Court.

Outside of her professional life, Jesse enjoys spending quality time with her family and friends.

Recent Presentations

Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: Legalities of Special Education Transportation, IAASE Winter Conference (February 2025)



KATIE DIPIERO

Associate, Chicago

312.332.7760

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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial
Transactions
Construction
Public Finance &
Taxation
Real Estate

EDUCATION

J.D., *cum laude*, Seattle
University

M.B.A., Seattle
University

B.A., University of
Kansas

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Katie N. DiPiero is a versatile attorney who brings focus to her practice on public finance and taxation, commercial law, construction law, and real estate development. Her legal practice primarily centers around assisting and representing school districts, community colleges, and municipalities in public finance and commercial matters. She is also well-versed in tax rate objections, real property taxation, valuation, and assessment appeals before the circuit court, Property Tax Appeal Board, and boards of review. Furthermore, Katie's proficiency extends to drafting and negotiating contracts in commercial transactions, assisting with nonprofits and foundations, as well as handling litigation and alternative dispute resolution.

In her role as an attorney, Katie finds immense satisfaction in writing and negotiating contracts, as well as tackling finance-related issues. Her strengths as a legal professional are exemplified through her exceptional writing and research skills, which have proven invaluable in her career.

Before her role at Robbins Schwartz, Katie assisted clients in tax planning and corporate reorganizations. She also gained valuable experience working for government entities and non-profit organizations.

Katie's impressive educational background led her to realize her calling – to assist others in navigating the legal system, particularly those with limited exposure to complex legal processes. Her desire to help people and her love for writing were the driving forces behind her decision to become a lawyer.

Katie's background, characterized by a journey from Kansas to Seattle, followed by work in Washington, D.C., has molded her into a well-rounded and empathetic attorney. Her ability to understand different perspectives, influenced by the myriad of experiences from her travels, significantly contributes to her capacity for finding creative solutions in her legal practice.

Outside her professional life, Katie is dedicated to staying active with her family and is working on refining her golf skills through lessons. An interesting facet of her life that many may not know is her background as a competitive pianist during her childhood.

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Opening Your Mind to Closed Sessions," *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2024)



Contributing author, “Environmental Issues” *Construction Law: Transactional Considerations*, (IICLE, 2021, 2025)

Recent Presentations

Navigating the Maze: Understanding District Funds vs. Student Activities vs. 501(c)(3) Not-for-Profits, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (2025)





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PRACTICE AREAS

DEI Compliance
Education
Employee Benefits
Labor & Employment
Litigation
Municipal

EDUCATION

J.D., Northwestern
University Pritzker School
of Law

B.A., Washington
University in St. Louis,
magna cum laude, high
distinction

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for the
Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of Illinois

Aaron counsels employers on various aspects of labor and employment law, including internal investigations, employee discipline, labor relations, workplace policies, and compliance with state and federal laws including the Illinois Human Rights Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Family and Medical Leave Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act, Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, Title VII, and others.

Aaron also represents employers in litigation in federal and state court and before administrative agencies such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Illinois Department of Labor.

Aaron's practice extends to traditional labor law, including labor arbitrations, grievance proceedings, and negotiation of collective bargaining agreements on behalf of employers.

Aaron provides trainings for employers on a variety of topics including best practices for internal investigations, strategies for preventing unlawful discrimination and harassment in the workplace, responding to requests for leave and accommodations, and identifying and managing implicit bias.

Within Robbins Schwartz, Aaron serves on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Committee and is Co-Chair of the Diversity & Awareness Planning Subcommittee. He is also Co-Chair of the firm's Civil Rights Team and an active member of the FOIA Team.

Before joining Robbins Schwartz, Aaron served as in-house employment law counsel for the Cook County Sheriff's Office. He has previously worked for the City of Chicago and an international law firm. During his time at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, Aaron served as Managing Executive Editor of the Northwestern Journal of Law & Social Policy and the President and Founder of the Northwestern Labor & Employment Law Society. He also served as a judicial extern for the Honorable Judge Joan B. Gottschall of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "Labor Relations: Contract Administration Including Unfair Labor Practices," *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2024)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chair, Labor and Employment Committee, Chicago Bar Association, Young Lawyers Section
Co-Chair, Northwestern Law LGBTQ+ Alumni Affinity Group

Co-Chair, Washington University in St. Louis Alumni and Parents Admission Program, Chicago North Shore Committee (2023-2024)

Secretary, Associate Board, Lawyers for the Creative Arts (2021-2025)

Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, Board of Directors, About Face Theatre (2018-2021)

Co-Author, "Seventh Circuit Addresses Employer Liability for Coworker and Supervisor Harassment and Challenges in Establishing Claims For Retaliation, Defamation, and IIED," *Employment and Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2023)

"When It Happens to You: Responding to Reports of Harassment and Discrimination," *Law Arts Blog*, Lawyers for the Creative Arts (July 2022)

Recent Presentations

EEOC in the News: Understanding the Legal Background, Investigations, and Recent Updates, American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) (March and June 2025)

The Bermuda Triangle of Leaves-ADA, FMLA and Workers Compensation, Illinois Association of School Business Officials Annual Conference (May 2025)

DEI In the News: Understanding the Legal Landscape, American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) (March 2025)

2024 Hot Topics in Labor & Employment Law Seminar, The Chicago Bar Association (February 2025)

Addressing Employee Mental Health in the Workplace, Illinois Association of Park Districts/Illinois Park and Recreation Association Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2025)

Year in Review: Seven Key Labor & Employment Updates from 2024, Illinois Local Government Lawyers Association (December 2024)

Responding to Employee Leave and Accommodation Requests in the Evolving Modern Workplace, Illinois Valley Association of School Business Officials (October 2024)

2023 Hot Topics in Labor & Employment Law Seminar, The Chicago Bar Association (February 2024)

Navigating Payroll Laws: Wages and Record Keeping Requirements, Illinois Association of School Business Officials Bookkeepers Conference (March 2023)

The Peanut Butter and Jelly Effect: Understanding Implicit Bias and Its Impact on Educators, Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) Legal Workshop (February 2023)

2022 Hot Topics in Labor and Employment Law, The Chicago Bar Association (February 2023)





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PRACTICE AREAS

Education
Special Education
Student Rights

EDUCATION

J.D., Loyola University of
Chicago School of Law

B.A., University of
Michigan

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for the
Northern District of
Illinois

U.S. District Court for the
Central District of Illinois

Supreme Court of Illinois

Hannah M. May practices in the area of education law with a focus on special education and student rights. She counsels school districts regarding Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504, student discipline, Title IX, residency, student records issues and policy development. She assists school districts in responding to complaints from the Office for Civil Rights, Office of the Attorney General and Illinois State Board of Education, and she represents school districts at IEP meetings, due process hearings, mediations, student discipline hearings and residency hearings.

While in law school at Loyola, Hannah was a Civitas ChildLaw Fellow with a concentration in education law. Hannah received her 711 license and represented students with disabilities in special education matters and served as a child representative in domestic relations and child protection proceedings. Additionally, Hannah was a senior editor on the Loyola University Chicago Law Journal. She also externed for the Honorable Anna Loftus of the Cook County Circuit Court, Chancery Division, and clerked for the Southern Poverty Law Center in the Children's Rights Practice Group in Miami, FL and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights in Chicago, IL.

As a graduate of the Chicago Public Schools, Hannah has always been passionate about advancing equity in education and giving back to her educational community. Hannah's upbringing in a diverse Chicago community, coupled with her own experience as a student, has deeply influenced her perspective. She has great respect and appreciation for the dedication of school administrators, teachers, and staff in providing quality education to children in the community. Her unwavering commitment to equity in education is evident in her determination to create positive change both within and beyond the school setting. Her determination to effect change on a broad, community-wide level inspired her to become an attorney.

Outside of her legal career, Hannah values spending time with family and friends, staying active, and nurturing her well-being. She's an avid hiker and cyclist, finds serenity by Lake Michigan while walking her dog, and enjoys hosting home-cooked dinners for her loved ones. Furthermore, she's a certified Yoga Instructor at CorePower Yoga, reflecting her holistic approach to a balanced and fulfilled life.

ORGANIZATIONS

Co-Chair, Education Law
Committee, Chicago Bar
Association, Young
Lawyers Selection

Illinois State Bar
Association

Illinois Council of School
Attorneys

Recent Publications

“Conducting Legally Compliant Investigations Involving Students with Disabilities,” *IAASE* (2025)

“Lessons Learned: Responding to RTO complaints and Implementing Corrective Actions,” *IAASE* (2024)

“Transition Programming: Preparing Student with Disabilities for Life After High School,” *IAASE* (2024)

“It’s Not an Easy A...Developing Legally Sound Grading Practices for Students with Disabilities,” *IAASE* (2023)

“Buried Alive: Gay v. Baldwin and Unconstitutional Solitary Confinement for Prisoners with Mental Illness,” *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal Volume 52, Article 8* (2021)

Recent Presentations

Transition Programming: Preparing Student with Disabilities for Life After High School, IAASE (February 2024)

It’s Not an Easy A...Developing Legally Sound Grading Practices for Students with Disabilities, IAASE (October 2023)





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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial Transactions
Construction
Real Estate Development

EDUCATION

J.D., Loyola University
Chicago

B.A., University of
Illinois

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of Illinois

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Danielle B. McNamara is an Associate at Robbins Schwartz, where she practices in Commercial Transactions, Construction Law, and Real Estate Development.

Prior to joining Robbins Schwartz, Danielle gained valuable experience in the legal field. She worked for a residential real estate firm during her college years, where she gained insights into the intricacies of property transactions. Subsequently, she transitioned to a commercial real estate firm, where she handled a wide range of tasks, including purchases and sales of commercial properties. These experiences equipped her with a comprehensive understanding of real estate law, laying a solid foundation for her career as an attorney.

Danielle is an active member of the Chicago Bar Association, where she remains committed to staying updated on the latest developments in the legal field and connecting with fellow legal professionals. Her involvement in professional associations underscores her dedication to continuous learning and professional growth.

During her time at Loyola University's Business Law Clinic, Danielle had the opportunity to assist individuals and businesses in starting and expanding their ventures. This hands-on experience, coupled with her innate passion for helping others, solidified her decision to pursue a career in law.

Outside of her legal pursuits, Danielle enjoys spending time with her family and engaging in outdoor activities. She values work-life balance and strives to maintain a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle.

Recent Publications

Contributing author, "School Property and Environmental Issues," *School Law: Organization, Finance, and Property*, IICLE (2025)

Contributing author, "Competency in ADR: Assuring Ethical Practice through Competency and Communication," *DCBA Brief*, The Journal of the DuPage County Bar Association (2024)

Recent Presentations

Bridging SOPPA and NDPA: Key Change to Student Data Agreements in Illinois, SecurED Schools K-12 Data Privacy & Cybersecurity Conference (January 2025)





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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
DEI Compliance
Education
Employee Benefits
Labor & Employment

EDUCATION

J.D., University of
Chicago Law School

M.P.P., University of
Chicago, Harris School
of Public Policy

B.B.A., summa cum
laude, Baylor
University

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

U.S. District Court for
the Northern District of
Illinois

Supreme Court of
Illinois

Matthew M. Swift is a member of the labor and employment practice group. He counsels employers in various aspects of employment law, such as employee discipline, employment contracts, wage and hour laws, and employment discrimination matters under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave Act, Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Illinois Human Rights Act, Title VII, and other federal and state anti-discrimination laws. He also helps clients with labor relations matters such as grievances and traditional and interest-based collective bargaining.

Matthew also frequently advises on legal issues that are unique to public-sector clients and educational institutions, including compliance with the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, the Open Meetings Act, the First Amendment, and Title IX. He works with clients on some of their most complex FOIA requests and board governance questions.

Before moving to Chicago for law school or attending college in Texas, Matthew grew up in a California mountain town, about a 20-minute drive from the nearest stoplight. He loves life in the big city—especially the museums and great food—but his more folksy roots still occasionally make an appearance.

Matthew has a soft spot for alliteration thanks to a family tradition—each Swift family member’s first initial matches their middle initial. He enjoys when his work requires careful interpretation or choosing precise language, and he always appreciates a clever turn of phrase.

Recent Publications

Contributing author, “Employee Discrimination,” *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2024)

“All Together Now – Employment Law Issues in the New Title IX Rules,” *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (2020)

Recent Presentations

Illinois FOIA at 15: Recent Decisions and Developments, Illinois Association of School Administrators Legal Seminar (April 2025)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Keep Calm and... Call a Lawyer? Spring 2025 Legal Updates, ICCCFD Spring Conference (April 2025)

Legal ABCs of DEI EOs and OCR, Illinois Community College Trustee Association Meeting and Seminar (March 2025)

Please Proceed in an Orderly Fashion: Responding (or not) to Executive Orders, ED-RED Virtual Member Meeting (February 2025)

FOIA Fundamentals: The Bottom Lines for School Business Officials, Illinois ASBO Lunch & Learn Webinar (November 2024)

Beyond the Redaction Marker: Tools and Strategies for Managing Difficult FOIA Requests, Large Unit District Association Communications Conference (December 2023)

The Open Meetings Act: FAQs and Answers, Illinois Community College Trustee Professional Development Training (June 2023)

