



Robbins Schwartz
One Team. Making Your Mission Ours.

2026 Legal Update for Illinois Higher Education Institutions

**Virtual
September 30, 2026**

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Agenda

8:30 am – 10:00 am

General Session

Leading the AI Campus: Soaring Legally

Presented by: Joseph J. Perkoski and Michelle L. Weber

10:00 am – 10:15 am

Break

10:15 am – 11:15 am

Session I

Balancing Student Rights and Institutional Rules in Student Conduct Proceedings

Presented by: Michelle L. Weber and Claire E. Bufalino

Whose Line Is It Anyway? Navigating Employee Speech from the Classroom to the Comment Section

Presented by: Matthew M. Swift and Elizabeth J. Becker

Beyond the Basics: Common and Not So Common Public Bidding and Procurement Challenges Facing Illinois Community Colleges

Presented by: Kenneth M. Florey, Matthew J. Gardner, and Howard A. Metz

11:15 am – 11:30 am

Break

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Session II

Mind the Gap: Bridging Expectations in Today's Collective Bargaining

Presented by: Catherine R. Locallo and Kevin P. Noll

From Project Problems to Legal Solutions: Managing Construction Disputes Before and After Litigation

Presented by: Kenneth M. Florey, Matthew J. Gardner, and Howard A. Metz

12:30 pm – 12:45 pm

Break

12:45 pm – 1:45 pm

Session III

Detecting and Reporting Student Aid Fraud: Identifying Red Flags, FERPA Issues, and Best Practices for Illinois Community Colleges

Presented by: Claire E. Bufalino and Danielle B. Daly

Disciplinary Action 101 – Best Practices and Legal Considerations for Employee Discipline

Presented by: Thomas C. Garretson and Natalie A. Jakubowski

General Session | 8:30 a.m.

Leading the AI Campus: Soaring Legally

While AI is quickly transforming college campuses and creating opportunities for innovation, it also creates complex legal challenges. This session will examine the legal impacts of AI across various sectors, including student services, employee relations, and board governance, and will explore topics such as student privacy, academic integrity, curriculum and instruction, employee relations, and hiring practices. Attendees will learn practical strategies to reduce legal risk and manage AI compliance.

Presenters:

[Joseph J. Perkoski](#), Managing Partner and [Michelle L. Weber](#), Partner

Session I | 10:15 a.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

Balancing Student Rights and Institutional Rules in Student Conduct Proceedings

This presentation will address how colleges ensure that student conduct processes are fair, consistent, and in compliance with legal and institutional requirements. It will address practical approaches to issues such as the provision of due process, campus safety considerations, and alignment of departmental practices.

Presenters:

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

Whose Line Is It Anyway? Navigating Employee Speech from the Classroom to the Comment Section

This session will cover current issues related to employee speech in higher education, featuring real-world examples and the legal standards behind the headlines. Attendees will learn about important precedents and recent cases that shed light on First Amendment protections—and their limits—in the context of academic freedom, speech as a private citizen, and social media use.

Presenters:

[Matthew M. Swift](#), Partner and [Elizabeth J. Becker](#), Associate

Beyond the Basics: Common and Not So Common Public Bidding and Procurement Challenges Facing Illinois Community Colleges

This presentation examines the legal and practical challenges Illinois community colleges face throughout the public procurement process—from developing bid specifications and requests for proposals (RFPs) to evaluating submissions and awarding contracts. Using real-world examples and practical guidance, attendees will learn to identify both common and less obvious procurement pitfalls, minimize legal and operational risks, and implement strategies that promote compliance, reduce disputes, and preserve the integrity of the competitive procurement process.

Presenters:

[Kenneth M. Florey](#), Partner, [Matthew J. Gardner](#), Partner and [Howard A. Metz](#), Partner

Session II | 11:30 a.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

Mind the Gap: Bridging Expectations in Today's Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining has grown increasingly complex due to evolving workplace expectations and financial realities that reshape the negotiating landscape. This session discusses current trends and explores strategies for narrowing the gap between labor and management through effective communication, problem solving, and practical approaches that foster productive negotiations.

Presenters:

[Catherine R. Locallo](#), Partner and [Kevin P. Noll](#), Partner

From Project Problems to Legal Solutions: Managing Construction Disputes Before and After Litigation

As with any construction project, construction disputes come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from scope of works issues, delays, payment claims, or defective work issues. One common thread of construction claims is that they are often complex and complicated, and result in significant headaches for college administrators and boards involved with the dispute. Join Robbins Schwartz's construction attorneys for this presentation to discuss practical strategies for handling disputes that arise before a project is completed, and available options for resolving disputes through negotiation, bond claims, mediation, arbitration, and litigation.

Presenters:

[Kenneth M. Florey](#), Partner, [Matthew J. Gardner](#), Partner and [Howard A. Metz](#), Partner

Session III | 12:45 p.m.

Please Select One Topic Per Session

Detecting and Reporting Student Aid Fraud: Identifying Red Flags, FERPA Issues, and Best Practices for Illinois Community Colleges

This session will explore the legal obligations and authority of higher education institutions in identifying, investigating, and responding to suspected student financial aid fraud (e.g., false or inconsistent information on FAFSA and institutional applications, academic attendance fraud, and handling inquiries from outside institutions). Participants will gain an understanding of relevant federal and state reporting obligations and institutional best practices, with particular attention to confidentiality and information-sharing concerns under FERPA.

Presenters:

[Claire E. Bufalino](#), Associate and [Danielle B. Daly](#), Associate

Disciplinary Action 101 – Best Practices and Legal Considerations for Employee Discipline

Is disciplinary action warranted and, if so, what is an appropriate level of discipline? These are questions that college administrators regularly grapple with when assessing incidents of employee misconduct. Join us for an overview of legal requirements, considerations, and best practices for effectively navigating the employee discipline process.

Presenters:

[Thomas C. Garretson](#), Partner and [Natalie A. Jakubowski](#), Associate

Biographies



JOSEPH J. PERKOSKI

Managing Partner, Chicago

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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. Perkosi 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.

Recognitions

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

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

College of Labor and
Employment Lawyers

Federal Bar Association

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

Illinois Bar Association

Illinois Council of School
Attorneys

National School Attorneys
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)

Presentations

Legislative Changes Impacting School Districts – A Status Update, LUDA Virtual Conference (January 2026)

From Headlines to High-Impact Board Leadership, IASB/IASA/IASBO Joint Annual Conference (November 2025)

Director’s Report: Veto Session Update, LEND October Council Meeting (October 2025)

How Union Lobbying is Reshaping the School Workplace of Today and Tomorrow, LUDA Fall Conference (October 2025)

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, LUDA Winter Conference (January 2024)

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





ELIZABETH J. BECKER

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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 (Liz) J. Becker focuses her practice on labor and employment, education, student rights, and board governance. She advises educational and public-sector employers on workplace investigations, discipline, and campus climate issues, and helps institutions align their policies, contracts, and handbooks with complex federal and state regulations, including Title IX, Title VII, the ADA, and the FMLA.

Before entering private practice, Liz built a career in higher education administration, association governance, and public service. Her roles with the National Panhellenic Conference, the NCAA, and a congressional district office provided her with a strong understanding of governance and compliance, as well as community expectations in educational and nonprofit settings. This experience shapes her practical, relationship-focused approach to client advising and sensitive investigations.

Liz earned her J.D. from Loyola University Chicago School of Law, where she took on leadership roles as Managing Editor of the Loyola University Chicago Law Journal and as a member of the Deans' Advisory Committee. She also holds a master's degree in Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs from the USC Rossier School of Education and a B.A. in Political Science and History from the University of California, Davis.

Liz is a long-time fraternity/sorority volunteer and serves in leadership roles with Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity, supporting collegiate chapters on policy, governance, and student leadership development. Outside of work and volunteering, she enjoys walking her dog along the Chicago lakefront and following Formula One racing. Despite living in the Midwest for a decade, this native Californian will never adjust to Chicago winters.

Presentations

Navigating Payroll Laws, Illinois ASBO Bookkeepers Conference (March 2026)



ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois State Bar
Association

Women's Bar Association
of Illinois

LEADERSHIP

Kappa Alpha Theta
Fraternity, Vice President





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PRACTICE AREAS

Education
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

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

Supreme Court of Illinois

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois State Bar
Association

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.

Presentations

Clarity in Crisis: Understanding ISBE's Updated RTO Guidance, IAASE Winter Conference (March 2026)

Lessons Learned from ISBE Cyclical Monitoring & Compliance, IAASE Fall Conference (October 2025)





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Associate, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Commercial Transactions
Construction
Public Finance & Taxation
Real Estate

EDUCATION

J.D., Loyola University
Chicago

B.A., University of
Illinois

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

Supreme Court of Illinois

ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Danielle B. Daly 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.

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)

Presentations

More Data, More Responsibility: Navigating Data Retention and Privacy in K-12 Education, SecurED Schools K-12 Data Privacy & Cybersecurity Conference (January 2026)



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





KENNETH M. FLOREY

Partner, Chicago & Lisle

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PRACTICE AREAS

Arbitration/Mediation
Board Governance
Commercial Transactions
Construction
Education
Energy
Litigation
Mediation
Municipal
Public Finance &
Taxation
Real Estate
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.

Certifications

Mediator Certification (Northwestern University 2017)

American Arbitration Association Mediator and Arbitrator Panels Member

Recognitions

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

Publications

Author, "Navigating the Future of School Purchasing, The Final Word," *Update Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2025)

Co-author, "Navigating the Evolving Map of School Purchasing," *Update Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2025)

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)



ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

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

Supreme Court of Illinois

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

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

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

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*, Illinois ASBO (2018)

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

Presentations

Road Map for Construction Projects, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (April 2026)

What I Wish I Knew Before Construction, Illinois ASBO Annual Conference (April 2026)

Best Practices in the Purchasing, Contracting and the Competitive Bidding Process, Illinois ASBO Administrative Academy (November 2025)

Construction 101: Understanding Money from Start to Finish, Wisconsin ASBO Midwest Facility Masters Conference (October 2025)

Advanced Land Use and Zoning Disputes with Local Governments, National Business Institute Webinar (October 2025)

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)





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Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
Commercial Transactions
Construction
Real Estate
Public Finance & Taxation

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, construction 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



ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois State Bar
Association

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

LEADERSHIP

Commercial, Construction,
and Real Estate Practice
Group Leader

Bar Association. Within Robbins Schwartz, Matt serves on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Committee and is Co-Chair of the Diversity & Awareness Planning Subcommittee.

Recognitions

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

Publications

Co-author, “The Evolution of Intergovernmental Agreements in Illinois,” *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2025)

Contributing author, “School Property and Environmental Issues,” *School Law: Organization, Finance, and Property*, IICLE (2017, 2021, 2025)

Contributing author, “Industrial and Engineering, Procurement, Construction Projects,” *Construction Law: Transactional Considerations*, IICLE (2025)

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

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)

Presentations

The Future is Here: Effective and Safe A.I. Implementation in Illinois Schools, IASA Winter Legal Seminars (April 2026)

Bidding and Managing a Successful Construction Project, IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference (January 2026)

More Data, More Responsibility: Navigating Data Retention and Privacy in K-12 Education, SecurED Schools K-12 Data Privacy & Cybersecurity Conference (January 2026)

Perfecting Public Project Claims, Chicago Bar Association Construction/Mechanics Lien Subcommittee Annual Mechanics Lien and Construction Claims Seminar (December 2025)

Federal Reform Initiatives: Updates and Guidance, Illinois Council of Community College Presidents Annual Retreat (October 2025)

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)





THOMAS C. GARRETSON

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
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

LEADERSHIP

Labor & Employment
Practice Group Leader

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.

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)

Presentations

FMLA 101, Illinois ASBO Bookkeepers Conference (March 2026)

State of the Law on Employee Discipline – Best Practices to Ensure Legal Compliance, IASPA Annual Conference (January 2026)

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, Illinois Community College Trustee Association 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)





NATALIE A. JAKUBOWSKI

Associate, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Labor & Employment
Title IX

EDUCATION

J.D., Loyola University
Chicago School of Law

B.A., University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

ADMITTED TO PRACTICE

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

Supreme Court of Illinois

LEADERSHIP

Chair, Labor and
Employment Committee,
Chicago Bar Association,
Young Lawyers Section

Natalie A. Jakubowski is an Associate with Robbins Schwartz and has a strong commitment to helping others navigate the complexities of Labor and Employment law, as well as Title IX matters. Fluent in both English and Polish, she often served as an advocate for her immigrant parents, bridging language barriers and guiding them through complicated matters. This early experience shaped her desire to become a lawyer, ultimately driving her to support others in understanding and navigating the law.

Her interest in Labor and Employment law was sparked while taking a course on Labor and Employment in the Education Workplace during law school. This led Natalie to focus her career on improving workplace environments and counseling employers on complex legal issues. She enjoys the process of helping her clients through intricate procedures and contributing to the creation of positive workspaces for all.

Natalie honed her skills while working as a law clerk for Chicago Public Schools, where she supported both the Labor and Employee Discipline Unit and the Office of Administrative Hearings and Labor Relations. These experiences solidified her desire to focus on Labor and Employment law, especially within the education sector. Natalie prides herself on providing diligent, forward-thinking counsel to her clients.

Outside of her professional life, Natalie enjoys spending time with her friends, family, and her cat. She also loves trying new restaurants and staying active by practicing yoga.

Presentations

2026 Legal Updates: An Overview of New Laws, Regulations, and Legal Issues Facing Illinois Community Colleges, Illinois Community College Chief Financial Officers Conference (April 2026)

Navigating Payroll Laws, Illinois ASBO Bookkeepers Conference (March 2026)

Legislative Update, ED-RED Member Meeting (February 2026)

How Union Lobbying is Reshaping the School Workplace of Today and Tomorrow, LUDA Fall Conference (October 2025)





CATHERINE R. LOCALLO

Partner, Chicago

312.332.7760

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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

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

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.

Recognitions

Honorable Gerald L. Sbarbaro Mentoring Award (2023)

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

Publications

"Seventh Circuit Upholds Employer Victory on Discrimination and Retaliation Claims," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2026)

"IDHR Releases Draft Rules for New Law Addressing Use of AI in Employment Decisions," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2025)

"Former DePaul Instructor Loses Appeal in Racial Discrimination Suit," *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2025)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois Council of School Attorneys

Illinois State Bar Association

National Council of School Attorneys

Justinian Society of Lawyers

Justinian Society of Lawyers Endowment Fund Scholarship Committee

Triton College School of Business Advisory Legal Committee

UNICO National

LEADERSHIP

Freedom of Information Act Team Leader

Past President, Justinian Society of Lawyers

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

Director, AHAI and Co-Chair, Tier II Committee

“Post-Muldraw Decision Addresses Evaluations and PIPs as Adverse Employment Actions,” *Employment & Labor Law Flashpoints*, IICLE (2025)

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

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 Flashpoints*, 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)

“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)

Presentations

The New Wave: Emerging Trends in Collective Bargaining, IASBO / South Suburban Regional Organization Meeting (February 2026)

Testing Boundaries: First Amendment Audits and Their Impact on Public Institutions, IASA Legal Seminar (December 2025)

Sunshine Laws in Focus: OMA & FOIA Legal Update 2025, Illinois Council of School Attorneys (November 2025)

Compliance with Illinois Sunshine Laws, FOIA and OMA Basic Compliance, LUDA Fall Conference (October 2025)

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 Joint Annual Conference (November 2024)

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





HOWARD A. METZ

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
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.

Publications

Co-author, "The Art of Preparing Bid Specifications," *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2025)

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

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

Author, "Navigating Public Bidding Under the Illinois School Code" *UPDATE Magazine*, Illinois ASBO (2022)

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, Ready Retrieval Imperative," *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (2019)



ORGANIZATIONS

Illinois Association of
School Business Officials

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)

Contributing author, “Organization, Finance, and Property,” *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2017)

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

Contributing author, “School Property and Environmental Issues,” *Illinois School Law*, IICLE (2010 and 2012)

Presentations

Best Practices in the Purchasing, Contracting and the Competitive Bidding Process, Illinois ASBO Administrative Academy (April 2026 and November 2025)

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

Board Governance
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.

Recognitions

Illinois Emerging Lawyers

Illinois "Rising Star," by Super Lawyers Magazine

Publications

Contributing author, "Employee Discrimination," *Illinois School Law: Personnel and Student Issues*, 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)

Presentations

Collective Bargaining/Contract Negotiations: Best Practice Strategies and Trends, ISDLAF+ School Finance Seminar (January 2026)

Federal Reform Initiatives: Updates and Guidance, Illinois Council of Community College Presidents Annual Retreat (October 2025)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Illinois State Bar
Association

LEADERSHIP

Higher Education Team
Leader

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

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

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)





MATTHEW M. SWIFT

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
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.

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)

Presentations

The ABCs of CBAs: Best Practices and Recent Trends, ISDLAF+ School Finance Seminar (March 2026)

Legislative Update, ED-RED Member Meeting (February 2026)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

FOIA Year in Review: Trends and Current Issues, Illinois ASBO SupportCon (December 2025)

Hot Topics in the Federal Government for School Business, Illinois ASBO Lunch & Learn Webinar (October 2025)

Illinois FOIA at 15: Recent Decisions and Developments, IASA Legal Seminar (April 2025)

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

Legal ABCs of DEI EOs and OCR, ICCTA 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, LUDA Communications Conference (December 2023)

The Open Meetings Act: FAQs and Answers, ICCTA Professional Development Training (June 2023)





MICHELLE L. WEBER

Partner, Chicago

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PRACTICE AREAS

Board Governance
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

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.

Publications

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

Presentations

The Last Word: Discipline, Residency, and UGP Complaints, IASB/IASA/IASBO Joint Annual Conference (November 2025)

Friend or Foe? Collaborating with Educational Advocates in the IEP Process, IAASE Fall Conference (October 2025)

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, IAASE Winter Conference (February 2023)



ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago Bar Association

Hellenic Bar Association

Illinois Council of School
Attorneys

Illinois Local Government
Lawyers Association

Illinois State Bar
Association

LEADERSHIP

Student Rights and Special
Education Practice Group
Leader

