



Melissa Lehane Rawlinson

Special Counsel

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“Litigation need not be an adversarial or challenging process. I endeavor—through careful listening and thoughtful dialogue—to help clients find resolutions that serve their entities in a positive way consistent with their core values and allow them to get back to the day-to-day tasks that are their mission and focus.”

Melissa Rawlinson is an attorney on Miller Nash’s education team, focusing on litigation and representing higher education institutions (community colleges, colleges, and universities), K-12 institutions, public school districts, and private schools in state and federal court. She works with the firm’s education clients on a range of matters that affect their students, administrators, educators, and employees. Melissa defends education clients in disputes involving race, gender, and age discrimination, disability discrimination and accommodation issues, wage and hour claims, wrongful discharge, retaliation, as well as general tort and contract claims.

Melissa joined Miller Nash first as a summer clerk, then as a litigation associate where she participated in trials, arbitrations, and mediations related to complex business and employment matters. She took an extended leave of absence from the firm to focus on raising her three daughters. During her leave, she volunteered and served in multiple leadership roles with educational institutions and youth and student activity groups, gaining valuable experience that now guides and informs her practice serving educational clients. Miller Nash welcomed Melissa back to the firm in 2021 as special counsel on its employment and education teams.

Professional Activities

- Multnomah Bar Association, Member
- Oregon State Bar, Member
- American Bar Association
 - Litigation Section, Member

Education

J.D., University of California Law, San Francisco (formerly UC Hastings), 1996

B.S., Santa Clara University, *summa cum laude*, political science, 1993

- Phi Beta Kappa

Saint Rose Academy, San Francisco, California

Bar Admissions

Oregon, 1996

Civic Activities

- Coos Bay Oregon Law Center/Central Oregon Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO), Miller Nash Expungement Clinic Pro Bono Volunteer
- National Charity League, Portland Chapter
 - President, 2023-present
 - Board of Directors, 2016-2019, 2020-2023
- Catholic Youth Organization, St. Mary’s Cathedral Club, Board of Directors, 2010-2012, 2018-2020
- Cathedral School Advisory Council, 2014-2017
- Youngset Cooperative Preschool
 - President, 2008-2010
 - Board of Directors, 2007-2010, 2013-2014

Representative Matters

Student Matters

- Prevailed on motion for summary judgment filed before discovery was commenced on contract and tort claims brought by a former graduate student against a private university.
- Successfully resolved claims against school district related to negligence and Title IX before case was filed.

Employment Litigation

- Favorably resolved age discrimination claim brought by former dean against a community college.
- Negotiated and favorably resolved discrimination and retaliation claims on behalf of private religious university.
- Favorably resolved former employee’s claims against public university that alleged discrimination based on race and gender as well as violations of the Oregon Equal Pay Act.

Public Law Procedures

- Successfully defended community college against multiple petitions filed with the district attorney’s office related to public records requests.
- Prevailed on a motion to quash and dismiss a writ of review on behalf of a public school district.

Presentations

- “Taking the Temperature Down: Employee Relations in a Divided World,” Miller Nash, Employment Law Seminar (Nov. 2024)
- “Who Wants to Be Legally Astute—Federal and State Legal Updates,” Miller Nash, Employment Law Seminar (Oct. 2023)
- “Strategic Risk Management: Keeping the Trains Running on Time,” Miller Nash, Employment Law Seminar (Oct. 2022)

Publications

- “Special Education—Practical Considerations for a Disciplined Approach to Student Discipline,” Miller Nash, *K-12 Education: News You Can Use*, Special Education Series (Dec. 2024)
- “Don’t Let Concerns About Due Process Undo Your Process: A Checklist for Responding to Special Education Due Process Complaints,” Miller Nash, *K-12 Education: News You Can Use*, Special Education Series (Oct. 2024)
- “Posting Outside the Office, but Not Outside the Scope of an Employer’s Potential Liability,” Miller Nash, *Employment Law in Motion* (Sept. 2024)
- “Make Sure the Clock Is Running: A Reminder from the Ninth Circuit,” Miller Nash, *Employment Law in Motion* (July 2024)

- “Off Campus, but Still Within Reach: Ninth Circuit Affirms a Public High School’s Right to Discipline Students for Online Off-Campus Speech,” Miller Nash (Jan. 2023)
- “Off the Clock in Oregon but Maybe on the Hook,” Miller Nash, *Employment Law in Motion* (July 2022)
- “Criticism is a Two-Way Street: a Road Well Travelled in Today’s Political World: Supreme Court Decision about Community College Raises Issues for Public Body Boards,” Miller Nash (Apr. 2022)
- “Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Frustrated Cheerleader; But Schools Can, If They Proceed with Caution, Discipline Students for Some Off-Campus Speech,” Miller Nash, *News You Can Use* (June 2021)
- “Supreme Court Oral Argument: Will a New Updated Test Supplant Tinker?,” Miller Nash Graham & Dunn, *News You Can Use* (Apr. 2021)
- “Off-Campus Speech: Will the New Normal Bring New Rules?” Miller Nash Graham & Dunn, *News You Can Use* (Apr. 2021)

Personal Activities

Outside of the office, Melissa enjoys spending time with her husband and three daughters, bringing people together over a home-cooked meal, finding new morning sunrise walks, and reading a good book.