



Principal, Chicago

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Monica H. Khetarpal is a principal in the Chicago, Illinois, office of Jackson Lewis P.C. and co-leader of the firm's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) resource group and Higher Education Industry Group. She is an experienced litigator and advisor, providing skilled advocacy and thoughtful advice, training, and strategic planning for her clients.

Her litigation experience includes employment, civil rights, and education-related cases, including those involving allegations of discrimination, harassment, wage and hour violations, and leave management, as well as a variety of contract and tort issues such as breach of employment and educational related contracts, defamation, whistleblower claims, and sexual misconduct. She regularly handles matters at all levels, from administrative agencies to jury trials to appeals in both state and federal courts. She also counsels clients through the mediation process, and provides advice regarding best practices to avoid litigation.

Monica's advice and counsel practice focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion matters, review and implementation of ESG policies, and crisis management. She has earned Certificates from Cornell University and the Public Relations Society of America to support this work. She draws on her substantial litigation experience, bringing both strong interpersonal skills and the legal acumen that come from years litigating a myriad of issues. Monica believes there is no one-size-fits-all in this area and ensures that her advice is tailored to the unique needs of each client. She regularly advises on discrete ESG related issues, such as pipeline initiatives, mentoring and employee resource groups, employee surveys, and goal setting. She also conducts larger scale compliance reviews to ensure DEI and ESG programs align with the constantly evolving applicable law in this area. She also conducts climate assessments, in cases where clients are looking to proactively improve their DEI profile, or in response to clusters of complaints or individual high-profile concerns. Monica frequently assists in crisis situations which have generated media attention, balancing reputational and legal risk factors through effective communications as well as proactive legal work. When her recommendations include training, she provides engaging group, one-on-one, and executive training in areas such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, inclusion, generational diversity, active bystander, and communication best practices.

Monica also focuses a significant portion of her practice on representing higher education clients and serves as co-leader of Jackson Lewis' Higher Education industry group. The group focuses on solving workplace law and other civil rights challenges facing higher education institutions. It represents both public and private universities in a range of matters including employment (including tenure) cases, Title IX claims, collegiate sports, academic policies and practices, ADA and Section 504 compliance, privacy and data security, immigration, benefits, strategic investigations, student claims, constitutional and state statutory issues, and traditional labor matters.

Practices

- Advice and Counsel
- Class Actions and Complex Litigation
- Corporate Diversity Counseling
- Corporate Governance and Internal Investigations
- Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)
- ESG Audio Guide
- Fitness
- Higher Education
- Litigation
- Retail
- Workplace Training
- Staffing and Independent Workforce
- Education: K-12

Education

- William & Mary Law School, J.D. 2004
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, B.A. 2001
- Cornell University edX, Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion 2020
- Cornell University edX, Certificate in Teaching & Learning in the Diverse Classroom 2022

Admitted to Practice

- 7th Circuit Court of Appeals
- Illinois - C.D. III.
- Illinois - N.D. III.
- Illinois - S.D. III.
- Illinois

In her personal education practice, Monica has represented higher education and K-12 institutions throughout her career. She has experience defending a variety of employment and student-related claims, such as denial of tenure, pay equity, sexual misconduct, reputational harm, and breach of contract cases. She also provides advice and counsel regarding high profile faculty and student matters, revising strategic policies and procedures, and conducting internal investigations and climate assessments. She has partnered with her clients in managing the student, faculty and media issues unique to the higher education setting, with a particular emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion matters in both student and employee populations.

Monica also devotes a significant amount of time to encouraging diversity, equity and inclusion within the legal profession. She is a mentoring coordinator for the firm's Chicago office and has also served on the Board of the South Asian Bar Association of Chicago, SABA's Foundation, and the Diversity Scholarship Foundation's Unity Dinner planning committee. She was the 2018 recipient of the Advocate for Diversity Award from Chicago's Diversity Scholarship Foundation. Monica also frequently speaks on topics related to women in the law and successful work-life balance, and founded the Chicago chapter of the firm's Practicing and Parenting group to support attorneys who balance their legal practice with raising children.

Honors and Recognitions

- *South Asian Bar Association of Chicago* "Women's Leadership Award" (2023)
- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, "Employment Law - Management" (2021-present)
- *Chicago Lawyer* and *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*, "40 Under Forty" (2019)
- *Illinois Super Lawyers*, "Rising Stars" (2010-2019) and "Super Lawyers" (2022-present)

Speeches

- "Navigating Faculty Misconduct Investigations," National Association of College and University Attorneys Annual Conference (June 2024)
- "I want them gone! How to leverage DEI and institutional values when termination is not an option," National Association of College and University Attorneys Annual Conference (June 2023)
- "The Swinging Pendulum: Trends in Reverse Discrimination Lawsuits and Legal Challenges to DEI Programs," Association of Corporate Counsel Chicago (February 2, 2023)
- "Responding to Demands for Accountability in DEI," Centerforce Driving Diversity in Law & Leadership: Chicago Summit (September 2022)
- "Race Neutral Strategies for Employment/Faculty Diversity," NACUA Workshop (September 2020)
- "COVID Liability Concerns and Risk Mitigation Strategies," NACUA's Virtual Winter 2021 CLE Workshop: COVID, Culture & Climate: Responding to a Challenging Campus Environment (February 3-5, 2021)
- "2019 Annual Conference – Unconscious Bias: Tackling the Biggest Stumbling Blocks to Diversity and Inclusion," Association of Corporate Counsel
- "2018 Quick Hit: Employment Law Year in Review," Association of Corporate Counsel (January 2019)
- "Roundtable Discussion – Key Employment Issues: When Trouble Arises," Association of Corporate Counsel (March 2019)
- "Roundtable Discussion – Key Employment Issues: When Trouble Arises," Association

of Corporate Counsel (March 2019)

- “2018 Annual Conference – Employment & Labor Law: A Primer for New In-House Practitioners,” Association of Corporate Counsel
- “TimesUp and Gender Equity Movements Come to Campus: Is Your Institution Ready,” Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities – HR Conference (2018)
- “2017: Title IX Update: What Now?” Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities – HR Conference (2017)
- “Ethical Quandaries for In-House Counsel,” South Asian Bar Association: (2016)
- “Hot Topics at the EEOC – And How to Stay Out of the Crosshairs,” (2015)
- “Creative Approaches to Work/Life Balance: How to Not Just Survive but Thrive on an Alternative Work Schedule,” South Asian Bar Association (2015)
- “How to Make Arbitration Agreements Work for You,” NAWL (2015)