



Principal, Denver

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Melisa.Panagakos@jacksonlewis.com

Practices

- Class Actions and Complex Litigation
- Disability Access Litigation and Compliance
- Leisure
- Hospitality
- Hotels
- Employment Litigation
- Restaurants
- Wage and Hour
- Workplace Training

Education

- University of New Mexico School of Law, J.D. 2013
- Colorado State University, B.A. 2010

Admitted to Practice

- 10th Circuit Court of Appeals 2014
- Colorado - D. Colo. 2014
- Colorado 2013

Melisa Panagakos understands that workplace law is about people and details. She is known for her personal and relatable demeanor with clients and witnesses, a critical factor when presenting complex matters to juries. Melisa defends her clients with practical yet persuasive strategies and does not shy away from trial. Indeed, she secured a defense verdict in a complicated race and age discrimination federal jury trial for one of the firm's major clients.

Melisa has also successfully resolved more than a dozen complex class and collective FLSA and state law wage and hour matters, as well as protected confidential and trade secret information in non-compete matters. She stays current in class action litigation trends and workplace challenges and enjoys sharing her insights with clients.

Melisa excels at preventive counseling, and clients turn to her frequently for advice on a range of workplace matters, including leave and accommodation issues, performance counseling, and terminations. Clients frequently ask Melisa to conduct workplace trainings on performance management, anti-discrimination and harassment, and unconscious bias focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.

As a native New Mexican and a graduate of Colorado State University and the University of New Mexico School of Law, Melisa has a particular affinity for companies in the Rocky Mountain area, and always enjoys in-person visits to better understand her clients' businesses.

In her spare time, Melisa enjoys being outside with her family, trail running, climbing the peloton leaderboard, and riding Lucky, the horse she has had since her childhood equestrian competitions.

Honors and Recognitions

- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, "Litigation – Labor and Employment" (2025)
- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, "Ones to Watch: Litigation – Labor and Employment" (2021-2024)

Speeches

- "Implicit and Unconscious Bias - Creating a More Diverse Workforce," Fall 2018 Employment Law Summit (presenter)
- "Managing Complaints of Sexual Harassment" – guidance on investigations, responding to agency charges, preparing to defend a litigation – Fall 2019 Employment Law Summit (presenter)
- "Defending A Claim of Sexual Harassment- A Case Study" – step-by-step analysis of litigating a case against the EEOC after a cause finding – Fall 2020 Employment Law Summit (presenter)