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James M. Leva

Practical Solutions for Complex Workplace Issues

Day Pitney Employment and Labor Partner James Leva has spent his entire legal career guiding employers through complex workplace issues arising from the ever-changing laws that impact the workplace.

As a member of Day Pitney's Employment and Labor department, Jimmy regularly defends employers against all types of employment-related claims, including discrimination, harassment, whistleblower and retaliation. He represents clients before state and federal courts, as well as government agencies. In addition to handling complex employment litigation, Jimmy counsels employers on day-to-day compliance with the spectrum of laws governing the employer-employee relationship. He also assists employers with workplace safety issues, including compliance with occupational safety and health laws. "Anything that relates to the workplace is something I handle," Jimmy says.

Intellectual curiosity and a passion for helping people solve problems drove Jimmy's decision to become a lawyer. He enjoys the process of thinking through challenging problems to identify practical solutions. "Complying with the myriad of laws governing the workplace can be intimidating for employers," he acknowledges, adding that his goal is "to make compliance a bit less daunting by providing practical solutions that employers can implement with minimal disruption to their day-to-day operations."

While helping clients find practical solutions to complex problems, whether during a crisis or with daily employment issues, Jimmy always approaches his work with empathy. This is a value he credits his parents with instilling in him. "Work is a significant part of peoples' lives," Jimmy says, adding that "issues in the workplace can, in many cases, be very personal, so it is important to approach them with empathy and compassion."

This was particularly important during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It truly was an unprecedented time with employers trying to navigate a very uncertain business climate while trying to comply with constantly evolving health and safety guidelines," he adds.

The Talbots, Inc., Senior Vice President and General Counsel Mara Calame says her company has relied on Jimmy throughout the pandemic to navigate essential services rules, inquiries from regulators and workplace safety issues. Jimmy advised Talbots then, as he does now, with confidence, knowledge and much-needed compassion, she says. "People immediately warm to him, and with Jimmy, you know you have someone who knows what they're doing and can help," she adds. "He is super good at what he does, including litigating, which is important because it is key to have someone skillful advocating for the company—especially in position statements and mediations."

Jimmy has a unique connection to the tristate area. He was born and raised outside Hartford, CT, and began his career at Day Pitney in the Hartford office in 2015. Jimmy moved to New Jersey several years ago, where he lives now with his wife and son. Living in both New Jersey and Connecticut—where Day Pitney has two of its largest offices—gave Jimmy the opportunity to work with, and learn from, an incredibly talented group of employment and labor attorneys.

Jimmy also provides pro bono legal services, which allows him to practice in other areas of law. One of his most memorable cases was not an employment matter, but a pro bono landlord-tenant dispute. The client was a military veteran facing eviction days before Christmas. Jimmy was able to successfully get the landlord to drop the case in its entirety and the client was able to stay in his home.

"In every case, you want to get the best outcome for your client, but this case was different in that the consequences of a loss meant that there would be a homeless veteran on the cold streets right before the holiday," he says.

When Jimmy is not assisting clients, he enjoys playing golf and spending time with his family, including his wife, son and French bulldog. He is an avid fan of the New York Yankees and UConn Huskies.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR

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