



News

Hinshaw Expands Government Practice Group With Experienced Partner in Chicago

July 27, 2021

Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP today announced the addition of education lawyer Laura E. Knittle as a partner in its Government Practice Group in Chicago. Formerly a partner at Kriha Boucek, Knittle brings extensive experience with all aspects of K-12 education law.

"Laura is well-positioned to assist Illinois school districts and school board members," said Richard S. Porter, chair of the firm's Government Practice Group. "Previous to becoming a lawyer, she taught school for several years and has first-hand experience with the complexities that arise in providing students with a quality education. Known for her passion, professionalism, and positive results, Laura is a welcome addition to our public entity group."

Knittle represents K-12 school districts in all areas of education law, including issues involving the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), alleged violations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, student discipline, student and school employee investigations, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) investigations, and confidentiality and student records. Much of her work is focused on special education and student matters, including the development of legally compliant Individualized Education Programs, mediation, and due process hearings. In addition to speaking at state and national education law conferences and drafting legislation for school districts, she is a former chair of the Chicago Bar Association's Young Lawyer's Section Education Law Committee.

"Relationships are the key to success in education and to obtaining positive results for clients," Knittle said. "I always take time to learn about the cultures and learning environments of my school district clients to ensure my advice meets their needs and is relevant to their circumstances. This has proved a successful approach to resolving even the most challenging educational issues and disputes. Hinshaw has a strong litigation platform and a deep bench of uniquely poised attorneys to support my practice and provide the legal resources to assist my clients with the wide array of complex matters that arise for school districts."

Knittle's recent accomplishments include advising school districts on all issues related to COVID-19 and school re-opening, prevailing in special education due process hearings for elementary and high school districts; handling OCR complaints related to disability discrimination, racial discrimination, and sexual assault; and handling student disciplinary and residency hearings. Her other emphases include defending districts in complaints before the U.S. Equal

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Opportunity Commission and Illinois Department of Human Rights; handling appeals of due process hearing decisions in the North and Central Districts of Illinois; conducting staff and student investigations; and addressing issues related to student confidentiality, including student records hearings.

She also advises school districts on complex, high-profile student matters, including the administration of medical cannabis; transgender student concerns; services for medically fragile students; student injury and death; social media issues; child abuse and neglect, including reporting issues faced by educators; student discipline matters (including but not limited to weapon use, bomb detonation, illegal drug sales or distribution) and breaches of student privacy or rights.

Prior to joining Kriha Boucek, Knittle was an associate at Franczek PC and a lawyer at Legal Aid Chicago. She received her B.A. in French and English, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Georgia and her J.D. from Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

Hinshaw has substantial experience with federal, state, county, and local government activities and policymaking in education and other institutional functions of municipal, state, and national entities. Its Government practice attorneys have a unique understanding of government policies and functions; for many, the core of their career experience is derived from high-level government service. The practice is experienced in all aspects of local government organization and operations, including general and bond elections, election contests, conflict of interest laws applicable to local government officers and contracts, annexations, budgets and appropriations, meeting requirements and parliamentary procedure, and publication requirements for legal notices.