

Colin McHugh

Statement of Interest for WSBA Labor and Employment Executive Committee At-Large Member (Plaintiff Counsel)

I am very interested in becoming nominated for a second time as the WSBA Labor and Employment Executive Committee At-Large Member, as the Plaintiff-side Counsel representative.

Since graduating from Gonzaga School of Law in 2013, and then attaining my Master of Laws (LL.M.) at the University of Texas School of Law, I have been practicing predominantly plaintiff-side employment law for over ten (10) years in Washington. I have a very established employment law practice I am one of just a few attorneys that regularly practice plaintiff-side employment law in Clark County, Washington. At my firm, it has been our mission to provide access to justice to those who may not otherwise afford it and provide competent counsel to working people in Southwest Washington.

Turning to my practice specifically, I love my work as a plaintiff-side employment attorney. My clients come from many under-represented groups including but not limited to members of the LGBTQ+ community, minorities facing race and national origin discrimination, undocumented immigrants, whistleblowers, pregnant and expecting people, and folks with disabilities simply looking for accommodations to continue in their jobs, just to name a few. I almost exclusively represent clients on a contingency basis and often do not get paid until my cases settle or are successful through trial and appeal, which can take years. I do this in part to help my clients, many of whom do not have an income, to seek justice through legal representation.

I am a very active participant in plaintiff and employment related organizations and issues. I have attended the WSBA Labor and Employment Section annual CLE for most of the last several years. I am also very active as a member of the Washington Employment Lawyers Association, the Washington State Association for Justice and the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association's Employment Law Section, and Clark County's local chapter of Inns of Court. I often participate in legal discussions on listservs, in my employment law blogs, and enjoy discussing and debating current changes in the law and policies proposed by many of the organizations of which I am a member. I enjoy this work and I enjoy being involved and collaborating with others to further the discussion of employment law.

Additionally, I am very involved in the Clark County Bar, the WSBA, the Federal Bar Association, as well as locally. I actively seek out ways to promote workers' rights in the community. For example, in the last few years, I have participated in speaking engagements to local chapters of LULAC, the NAACP, the Local Inns of Court, WSAJ, WELA and advanced-practice nurse organizations, often discussing changes in Washington or federal law and empowering workers to stand up for themselves against abusive employers. I have also in the past served as a coach for local softball teams and a coach of a multiple-District Championship-winning mock trial team that appears at the state tournament virtually every year.

My leadership experience is also unique, and I am willing to put in the work on the Labor and Employment Committee. I am a former Trustee and board member of the Federal Bar Association Western District of Washington and I served on the nominations committee. I would often surprise my fellow board members by traveling hours to participate in meetings face-to-face as opposed to passively participating over the phone or Zoom. Additionally, my colleagues looked to me to find nominees for positions outside of the Seattle area, which proved to be very successful. I believe this experience will be useful on the Labor and Employment Executive Committee.

I am deeply committed to the study and litigation of employment law. I have litigated through trial and arbitration on employment issues, appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, Washington's Division II Court of Appeals, and appeared before the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, leading to published cases and changing the law in employment cases. In Washington, I have litigated in Clark County, King County, Klickitat County, Spokane County, Cowlitz County, Lewis County, and Skamania County. I also currently have an employment case pending before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and I have litigated in federal court in both the Western District and the Eastern District of Washington.

Moreover, I pride myself on being collegial and consider myself to very collaborative and respectful, even in contentious cases. Some of my most successful results for employment clients have come from cases where I have stayed in touch with opposing counsel and later considered them to be close friends. I believe more of this is needed in our profession as opposed to scorched earth, no quarter-type litigation, which in my view is frequently unnecessary.

Finally, I am extremely excited about the opportunity to continue to serve on the Labor and Employment Executive Committee for a second term. So far in this role, I have planned, participated in, and appeared on panels for CLEs regarding noncompetition agreements, wage and hour class actions, and other educational events in Washington. I believe I can continue to help this committee grow and be a resource to Washington labor and employment attorneys.

I hope to continue and expand my involvement and discussion of employment law with this Committee and I very much appreciate your kind consideration for this nomination. Please feel free to contact me with any other questions you may have.