

What does a labor and employment lawyer do?

Labor and employment law governs the relationship between employers and employees. As a general rule, labor and employment lawyers either represent employers/management or employees/unions. A labor and employment practice encompasses four key specialties:

Counseling and Compliance - Employers must comply with more than 180 federal laws administered and enforced by the Department of Labor (DOL), the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and state agencies. Labor and employment lawyers assist their clients in developing policies and procedures to ensure compliance with these laws, including those governing workplace safety and health, union activity, equal employment opportunity, family and medical leave, and layoffs.

Employment Disputes and Litigation - Employment litigation attorneys represent clients in state and federal courts in actions involving discrimination, wrongful discharge, wage-hour violations, family and medical leave, and other employment-related claims.

ERISA and Employee Benefits - The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) is a federal law that sets minimum standards for most voluntarily established pension and health plans in private industry to protect employees' retirement benefits. As a general matter, ERISA practices are transactional in nature and ERISA attorneys have some familiarity with tax law. However, there are lawyers who specialize in ERISA litigation.

Labor Relations - Labor lawyers assist either management or labor union clients in all aspects of collective bargaining agreements, provide advice and counsel in all stages of the grievance and arbitration processes, advise in contract administration issues, and provide counsel on strikes and work stoppages. On the management side, labor lawyers defend corporations in actions brought by labor unions in matters relating to the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and other statute and state law claims.

Where can I practice labor and employment law?

Labor and employment lawyers work in small and large law firms, corporate law departments, the general counsel offices of federal agencies, labor unions, and federal and state enforcement agencies such as the Department of Labor, the National Labor Relations Board, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

How can I get a job as a labor and employment lawyer?

Take all the labor and employment law courses offered by UB. Join the Maryland State Bar Association's Labor and Employment Section and the American Bar Association's Labor and Employment Section, and attend their events. Use www.martindale.com to find UB alumni with labor and employment practices that interest you, and ask for an informational interview. Seek out an internship with the Department of Labor or the EEOC. If you are interested in labor law, intern with the National Labor Relations Board or with a union. Working at a labor and employment law firm as an intern or law clerk is the best route to a job in private practice after graduation in this field.

Where can I learn more?

American Bar Association's Labor and Employment Law Section - www.abanet.org/labor/home.html

American Federation of Government Employees - <http://www.afge.org/>

American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations - <http://www.aflcio.org/>

Directory of Labor and Employment Law websites - <http://www.hg.org/employ.html>

Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation - <http://www.dlir.state.md.us>

Maryland State Bar Association's Labor and Employment Law Section -

http://www.msba.org/sec_comm/sections/laboremp/

National Employment Lawyers Association - www.nela.org/home.cfm

National Labor Relations Board - <http://www.nlr.gov/>

U.S. Department of Labor - www.dol.gov/

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - <http://www.eeoc.gov/>

Who teaches labor and employment law at UB?

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