

SERVICE AREAS

Business

- Employment + Labor
 - Class, Collective Action + Complex Employment Litigation
 - Employment Litigation + Dispute Resolution
 - Employment Practices Counseling: Preventive Employment Relations
 - Labor Relations
 - Public Entities and Governmental Contracting, Compliance + Reporting
- Entertainment, Sports + Multimedia

Litigation + Trial

- Employment + Labor
 - Class, Collective Action + Complex Employment Litigation
 - Employment Litigation + Dispute Resolution
 - Employment Practices Counseling: Preventive Employment Relations
 - Labor Relations
 - Public Entities and Governmental Contracting, Compliance + Reporting

Governments + Nonprofits

- Sustainable Government Initiative
- Employment + Labor
 - Class, Collective Action + Complex Employment Litigation



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John H. Willems brings to his labor and employment clients the unique perspective of having been both a union and management representative. A practicing attorney for more than 25 years, John has extensive experience in every facet of labor and employment law, including complex employment and class action litigation in state and federal court, collective bargaining, contract and interest arbitration, as well as administrative proceedings before the EEOC, NLRB and MERC. John has a consistent record of achieving favorable results in trials, hearings and negotiations in high-exposure labor disputes and summary dismissals of lawsuits.

On the entertainment side, John has represented recording artists and record labels, and has counseled and advised musicians, producers, film makers, visual artists and dancers on business and legal issues. He has also been active as a recording and performing musician and sound designer, producer, recording studio owner/operator and videographer in his own right. John is also a tireless supporter and advocate of arts and culture in the community, providing pro bono legal assistance to artists and arts organizations, as well as contributing countless hours of volunteer time in many other ways.

"Lawsuits, contract negotiations and labor disputes aren't wars, they're business problems. My personal approach is one of creative but practical and cost-efficient problem solving."

John H. Willems

EXPERIENCE

John has represented counties, municipalities, universities and public school districts as lead counsel on highly visible contract negotiations and interest arbitrations as well as class action and individual discrimination and major public policy lawsuits. He has

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EDUCATION

- Wayne State University Law School, J.D.
- Portland State University, B.A.

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Michigan

LANGUAGES

- Dutch

also represented a number of private sector employers in the airlines, manufacturing, advertising, personnel, automotive, consulting, financial and gaming industries in individual and class action litigation. Prior to joining Miller Canfield, John represented a number of major private and public sector unions, including the United Auto Workers (UAW), Steel Workers, Communication Workers, and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Representative Matters

When a local municipality, facing severe budget deficits, determined that its best course of action was to do the unthinkable and disband its Police Department, John was called in to develop the strategy and lead on both the extremely difficult negotiations with the police unions as well the related administrative actions and lawsuits. John successfully negotiated the disbanding of the police department and transfer of police functions to the county and obtained dismissal of the unions' lawsuits and subsequent unanimous affirmance by the Michigan Court of Appeals.

When the City of Detroit's politically controversial decision to spin off its Housing Department was met with union resistance, John led the litigation on behalf of the City. Although a lower court initially granted the union's request for an injunction halting the spin off, John successfully argued for reversal and obtained a unanimous ruling in the City's favor from the Michigan Supreme Court.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- American Bar Association, Forum on Entertainment and Sports Industries; Labor and Employment Law Section; International Law and Practice Section
- State Bar of Michigan, Arts, Communications, Entertainment, and Sports Section, Former Chair; Labor and Employment Law Section, Member; International Law Section, Member
- Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association
- Michigan Public Employers Labor Relations Association
- Industrial Relations Research Association, Detroit Chapter

HONORS + AWARDS

- Michigan Super Lawyers, Employment & Labor, 2006-present

John H. Willems

- Best Lawyers in America, Labor and Employment Law 2010-2011; Employment Law-Management and Labor Law-Management 2012
- Best Composer (Jazz), Detroit Music Awards 1994
- Best Keyboardist (Jazz), Detroit Music Awards 1994
- Best Recording (Jazz), Detroit Music Awards 1995 and 1996
- Best Group (Jazz), Detroit Music Awards 1995

CIVIC, CULTURAL + SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- Michigan ArtServe, Board of Directors
- Downriver Council for the Arts, Former President; Executive Committee; Board of Directors
- Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, Advisory Board and Volunteer Attorney
- Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the U.S.

PUBLICATIONS

Editor-in-Chief, 2004 and 1994 Editions Michigan Public Employer Labor Relations Manual

"Contingent Employment and Employee Leasing Arrangements," National Law Journal, October 13, 1997

"A Michigan Employer's Guide to Flexible Staffing," Michigan Chamber of Commerce, 1995

"Practical Considerations in Grievance Arbitration", Michigan Public Employment and Labor Relations Law, Michigan Public Employers Labor Relations Association, 1994

TRANSLATIONS

"Weak Corporatism Going Different Ways? Industrial Relations in the Netherlands and Belgium," Industrial Relations in Europe, Van Ruysseveldt, J., Visser, J., Eds. Sage Publications Ltd. (London, 1996)

"The Crisis of Fordism: Restructuring in the Automobile Business," Dankbaar, B. Comparative Industrial & Employment Relations, Van Ruysseveldt, J., Huiskamp, R., van Hoof, J., Eds. Sage Publications Ltd. (London, 1995)

SPEECHES

Mr. Willems has spoken extensively to human resources and business professionals and public and private sector human resources associations in a number of settings on such issues as collective bargaining in the public sector; strategies for inter-governmental cooperation; contingent employment and employee leasing arrangements; NAFTA trade and labor issues; defending and winning discrimination cases and alternative dispute resolution.

SEMINARS + EVENTS

- 2011 HR Spring Training Seminar

ALERTS

- New Local Fiscal Accountability Bills Approved