



Margaret L. Watson

Shareholder

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Focus Areas

Litigation and Trials
Investigations
Whistleblowing, Compliance and Investigations
Discrimination and Harassment
Financial Services

Overview

Margaret L. Watson is a highly experienced employment law trial attorney who has successfully represented clients in federal and state courts as well as in arbitrations (FINRA, AAA, JAMS) and agency proceedings. She serves as a co-chair of the firm's Financial Services Group and its FINRA Arbitration Team.

Margaret regularly defends employers and individual managers in cases involving discrimination and retaliation claims under Title VII, Section 1981, ADA, ADEA, FMLA, and related New York State and City laws, as well as claims of violations of Dodd Frank and New York State's whistleblower laws. Representative cases during her extensive career also include claims of fraud, breach of contract, defamation (including U-5 defamation), tortious interference, as well as the review and enforcement of restrictive covenants.

Margaret's practice includes counseling clients on litigation-avoidance strategies and risk management. She assists clients with investigations and policy audits. She has substantial experience with strategic initiatives around increasing diversity in the workplace and she is dedicated to partnering with clients to proactively prevent employment claims and enhance employee performance.

Prior to joining Littler, Margaret was the sole employment law counsel for the New York City office of a large East Coast regional law firm. Margaret previously served as inhouse counsel to a global wealth management firm, and she

successfully designed and managed the first corporate ombudsman office for the U.S. broker-dealer business of that company.

Margaret began her career as a law clerk to the Hon. Whitman Knapp in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, and has practiced in the areas of securities law and white-collar criminal defense. She also previously served as a partner in a law firm where she represented employees as plaintiffs in discrimination matters. She is a trained mediator and has served as a trained neutral.

Selected Matters

- *O'Neill v. Wilder*, 204 A.D.3d 823 (2d Dep't 2022). Motion to dismiss all claims under CPLR 3211 (a)(7) granted by Trial Court and affirmed by Second Department, including claims of alleged intentional infliction of emotional distress.
- *Faith Altman v. Salem Media of New York, LLC et al.*, 2019 WL 4323944 (NY Sup), affirmed 188 A.D.3d 515 (1st Dep't). Motion to compel arbitration of discrimination claims granted.
- *Schmitt v. Artforum International Magazine, Inc.*, 178 A.D.3d 578 (1st Dep't 2019). First Department affirmed Trial Court's decision (reported at 2018 WL 6732892) to grant individual defendant's motion to dismiss claims of unlawful retaliation and defamation, ending litigation against individual.
- *Barry Friedland v. UBS AG*, 16-cv-0687 (E.D.N.Y. February 2016) (Scanlon, J.), Motion to dismiss ERISA claims pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b) (6) or in the alternative for summary judgment pursuant to Rule 56 granted.
- *Courtney Charley v. Total Office Planning Services, Inc., and John Doe*, 14 Civ. 0085 (S.D.N.Y. August 23, 2016) (Buchwald, J.). Motion for summary judgment dismissing claims under 42 U.S.C. §1981 granted.
- *In re: Rafael Diamond*, 15 Civ. 10317 (U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York). Motion for relief from bankruptcy stay and separate motion to dismiss petition in bankruptcy granted. See also, *UBS Financial Services Inc. v. Rafael Diamond*, Index No. 650140/2016 (Sup. Ct. N.Y. County, July 14, 2016). (Petition to confirm arbitration award granted and judgment entered in favor of UBS); *Rafael Diamond v. UBS Financial Services Inc.*, FINRA Case No. 13-00609 (Feb. 2, 2015) (Arbitrators' Award granting summary judgment in favor of UBSFS on all claims and counterclaims).
- *UBS Financial Services Inc. v. Gary T. Padussis*, No. 15-2148 (4th Cir. 2016) and *UBS Financial Services Inc. v. Gary T. Padussis*, 127 F.Supp.3d 483 (D. Md. 2015) (Quarles, Jr. J.). Petition to vacate arbitration award on grounds arbitrators lacked authority to decide matter denied and decision of District Court affirmed on appeal.
- *Hartford Life and Accident Insurance Co. v. Ronald Rogers, Harvey M. Spear and Ruth A. Spear*, 13 Civ. 101 (D.N.D. November 12, 2014) (Erickson, Chief Judge). Motion for judgment on the pleadings granted in this interpleader action brought under ERISA, resulting in award to our clients of life insurance proceeds.
- *Kelly Codrington v. CARCO Group Inc.*, 13 Civ. 2780 (E.D.N.Y. 2013) (Feuerstein, J.). Motion for summary judgment dismissing pregnancy discrimination claims filed, and matter was resolved while that motion was *sub judica*.
- *Trapps v. Jett Industries et al.*, 12 Civ. 02133 (S.D.N.Y. May 31, 2013) (Koeltl, J.). Motion to dismiss granted in part and denied in part, dismissing Title VII retaliation claims.

- *Williams v. Skyline Automotive Inc.*, 11 Civ. 4123 (S.D.N.Y., May 30, 2012) (Scheindlin, J.). Motion for summary judgment granted, dismissing plaintiff's wage law claims under federal and state law.
- *Williams v. Skyline Automotive Inc. et ano.*, 11 Civ. 8318, 2012 WL 4857509 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 9, 2012) (Forrest, J.). Motion for partial summary judgment dismissing state and city law discrimination and retaliation claims granted. See also *Williams v. Skyline Automotive Inc.*, 11 Civ. 8318 (S.D.N.Y., March 2013) (motion to enforce settlement agreement granted dismissing remainder of action).
- *Costello v. New York State Nurses Association et al.*, 783 F.Supp.2d 656, 2011 WL 1560971 (S.D.N.Y., April 25, 2011) (Scheindlin, J.). Motion for summary judgment granted, dismissing claims of age, gender, race and national origin discrimination and alleged unlawful retaliation under federal, state and city law.
- *Cooper v. New York State Nurses Association et al.*, 847 F.Supp.2d 437, 2012 WL 913080 (E.D.N.Y., March 16, 2012) (Hurley, J.). Motion for summary judgment granted in part and denied in part, resulting in dismissal of plaintiff's gender discrimination and retaliation claims, but leaving claim of alleged violation of FMLA for trial.
- *Sussex Commons Associates, LLC et ano v. Rutgers, The State University; Rutgers Environmental Law Clinic; and Rutgers University Custodian of Records*, 210 N.J. 531 (2012). Petition for certiorari granted resulting in Supreme Court ruling in defendants' favor exempting defendant Rutgers Environmental Law Clinic from obligations of New Jersey's Open Public Records Act.
- *Shah v. RBC Capital et ano.*, Index No. 151482/13 (Sup. Ct. New York County, June 11, 2013) (Kenney, J.). Motion to dismiss complaint granted dismissing retaliation claims arising from termination of employment.
- *Real Estate Mortgage Network, Inc. v. Carnegie Mortgage, LLC et al.*, Dkt. No. 651842/2012 (Sup. Ct. New York County, Feb. 5, 2013) (Schweitzer, J.). Motion to dismiss complaint alleging claims of fraudulent inducement, rescission and negligent misrepresentation granted.
- *Celentano v. MetLife Inc. et al.*, Dkt. No. 12694/11 (Sup. Ct. Nassau Co., Apr. 3, 2012). Motion to dismiss complaint alleging claims of fraud granted.
- *Goldstein v. Drew University*, Index No. 101944/2010 (Sup. Ct. Richmond County, October 2010) (Maltese, J.). Motion to dismiss complaint for lack of jurisdiction granted.

*** Note: Representation in Selected Matters prior to 2019 was prior to employment with Littler.**

Professional and Community Affiliations

- Member, New York State Bar Association
- Member, Association of the Bar of the City of New York
- Member, HLS Women's Alliance of New York

Education

J.D., Harvard Law School, *cum laude*

B.A., Swarthmore College, *Phi Beta Kappa*

Bar Admissions

New York

Courts

U.S. Supreme Court

U.S. Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit

U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York

U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York

Publications & Press

DFS Whistleblower Guidance: Advice and a Warning Shot

New York Law Journal

March 13, 2019

Littler Adds Shareholder Margaret L. Watson in New York

Littler Press Release

January 29, 2019

Speaking Engagements

Whistleblowers: The New and Increased Risks

Littler 2023 Tri-State Regional Employer Conference

June 20, 2023

2023 Tri-State Regional Employer Conference

New York, NY

June 20, 2023

Protecting Privilege in Internal Investigations

Knowledge Group

June 7, 2023

Pitfalls of Arbitrating Employment Law Claims in FINRA

Lawline

December 8, 2022

Whistleblower Complaints: A Guide for Managers

New York, NY

October 3, 2022

A Virtual Financial Services Roundtable

September 28, 2021

A Virtual FINRA Roundtable

June 10, 2021

Virtual Financial Services Roundtable

New York, NY

April 6, 2021

Best Practices to Resolve Internal Complaints

New York, NY

November 5, 2020

Time for a Tune-Up: Compliance Tips for 2019 and Beyond

New York, NY

April 23, 2019

The Form U-5: Best Practices in How to Minimize Litigation Exposure and Reduce Potential Damages

CLE

March 28, 2017

Best Practices in Preserving Privilege in Internal Investigations and When Providing Guidance to Business

CLE

March 2, 2017