

People



Thomas Y. Mandler

Co-Chair, Traditional Labor Law Practice

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vCard

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Tom Mandler represents employers on a nationwide basis in the full spectrum of issues dealing with their employees, whether or not they are employed at-will, pursuant to an employment agreement, or represented by a union. A substantial portion of his practice is devoted to advising employers on how to maintain union-free status, including conducting supervisory training, union vulnerability audits, election campaigns, and defending unfair labor practice charges.

For employers whose employees are represented by a union, Tom has negotiated more than 300 collective bargaining agreements nationwide, some of which have involved Federal Mediators, strikes, picketing and injunctions. He has also handled countless grievance and arbitration proceedings, as well as having represented employers in court and before all federal and many state and local governmental agencies enforcing labor, equal employment opportunity, wage and hour, affirmative action, and occupational safety and health laws.

Tom attempts to prevent or minimize costly legal problems by devoting a substantial part of his practice to supervisory training, client counseling, and workplace claims prevention. He also serves as outside general counsel for several clients, in matters involving business disputes, and drafting contracts such as distribution and supply agreements.

Notable Work

Ongoing Labor Counsel: Negotiated two unique provisions in a client’s collective bargaining agreement that diminish the union’s authority to negotiate wage increases. The client’s Board of Directors establishes the same annual percentage wage increases for all employees, including those represented by the union; and as the result of the pandemic, management can unilaterally increase the wages of any union employee who may be adversely affected by an Act of God.

Areas of Experience

Labor and Employment
 Traditional Labor Law
 Employment Training and Compliance
 Employment Administrative Claims Defense
 Cannabis
 Hospitality
 Higher Education and Collegiate Athletics

Education

J.D., University of Illinois College of Law, *Law Forum*, Associate Editor
 B.A., University of Wisconsin, History and Political Science, Iron Cross Honor Society

Admissions

Bars

Illinois

Courts

U.S. Supreme Court
 U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
 U.S. District Court, Central District of Illinois
 U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois – Trial Bar
 U.S. District Court, Southern District of Illinois
 U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Wisconsin

Related Content

Akerman Hosts Webinar on Labor Law Updates & Non-Compete Best Practices
 May 21, 2025

Akerman Hosts Annual NCAA Tournament Watch Party
 March 20, 2025

Akerman Hosts Webinar on Falling in Love with Perfect Policies: Crafting a Handbook You’ll Adore
 February 12, 2025

Labor Peace Agreements: Negotiated several Labor Peace Agreements (LPAs) which were required for a client to submit as part of its license applications in several state and local jurisdictions. A LPA makes it much easier for a union to organize employees because the employer agrees to provide the union with access to the employees, remain neutral during the union's organizing, and have a card check to determine if the union represents a majority of the employees instead of a NLRB secret ballot election. In order to avoid the aggressive union that represents many employees in the industry involved, I introduced our client to two unions that we have experience with that understand business and are more cooperative.

Contentious Labor Negotiations: Represented a West Virginia aluminum manufacturer in negotiating a favorable collective bargaining agreement with United Steel Workers under very difficult circumstances. Concurrent with the labor negotiations, the client was confidentially negotiating the sale of that facility. That significant external complication compounded the challenge of negotiation with a very aggressive and strike prone union. It was critical to maintain the confidentiality of the possible sale to prevent any adverse effect on the labor negotiations, while regularly informing the buyer of bargaining progress to maintain its interest in the acquisition. Negotiated an economically advantageous collective bargaining agreement that avoided a strike for the client, which was a significant contributing factor to the facility's sale.

Nationwide Arbitrations: Represented a multi-plant manufacturer in a series of nationwide arbitrations involving master collective bargaining agreements with different unions that claimed lifetime insurance benefits for retirees. The potential liability for each of these arbitrations was several million dollars.

Ongoing Labor Counsel: Represents an international plastic film manufacturer in dozens of consecutive labor negotiations without any work stoppages. Originally engaged 40 years ago to resolve a Teamster Union strike in Indiana. Subsequently helped guide the client through numerous plant expansions and the construction of new facilities, some of which are union-free.

Internationally Based Clients: Represents numerous foreign clients with substantial business operations in the United States. By representing those clients, he has gained global perspective of labor and employment law issues.

Published Work and Lectures

- Cannabis Law Institute 2024, Speaker, "Cannabis Labor Issues: Labor Peace Agreements and Beyond," July 26, 2024
- Akerman Labor & Employment Law Summit, Co-Moderator, "Talking to Your Employees About Unions: The Do's and Don'ts," May 2, 2024
- Akerman Webinar, Co-Presenter, "The Highs and Lows of Unions in Cannabis," January 11, 2024
- Akerman Labor & Employment Law Summit, Co-Moderator, "A Seat at the Table: Employees Want It, Unions Promise It. How the Landscape Has Changed for All Employers (Non-Union and Union)," May 4, 2023
- *Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education*, Co-Author, National Labor Relations Board Jurisdiction, 2021
- *Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education*, Co-Author, "How an Employer Can Minimize Employment Discrimination Risks,"

Employment Discrimination, 2018

- *Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education*, Co-Author, “How To Hire, Manage, and Terminate Employees,” 2018
- *Law360*, Co-Author, “Biometrics In The Workplace: Best Practices For Compliance,” December 14, 2017
- Akerman Webinar, Presenter, “NLRB and Non-Union Employers,” 2017
- Akerman Annual Client Seminar, Presenter, “Non-Union Employers Beware: The NLRB Is Targeting You,” 2016
- FMCS National Labor Management Conference (Future@Work), Presenter, “Mediation Best Practices and Ethics for Lawyers and Other Advocates,” 2016
- American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Presenter, “Negotiations,” 2016
- Leading Age, Senior Living Conference, Presenter, “Labor & Employment Law Update,” 2016
- Leading Age, Senior Living Conference, Presenter, “Employee Investigations,” 2015

Affiliations

- American Bar Association, Section on Labor Relations, Member, 1975-Present
- Township High School District No. 113 Board of Education, President of the Board (1996-1997) and (2000-2003); Member (1991-2003)
- Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education, Member; Chairman (1993-1994), Executive Committee Member (1988-1995), Board of Directors Member (1982-1995)

Honors and Distinctions

- *College of Labor and Employment Lawyers*, Elected Fellow, 2009-Present
- *Best Lawyers*, 2023-2025, Listed in Illinois for Employment Law – Management and Labor Law - Management
- *Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2005-2022, Listed in Illinois for Employment & Labor
- *Lawdragon*, 2020-2025, Listed as a “*Lawdragon* 500 Leading U.S. Corporate Employment Lawyer;” 2025 Hall of Fame
- *Crain’s Chicago Business*, 2023, Named a “Notable Leader in Employment and Labor Law”
- *Human Resource Executive*, *Lawdragon*, Elected into “The Nation’s Most Powerful Employment Attorneys Hall of Fame,” 2016
- *Labor Relations Institute*, 2006-2007, Named as one of the “Top One Hundred Labor Attorneys in the United States”
- *Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education*, Recipient of the Addis E. Hull Award of Excellence, 2000
- *Leading Lawyers Network*, Elected Member, 2005-present