

Press Release

Akerman Attracts 13 Labor and Employment Lawyers in Los Angeles, New York, Florida

May 9, 2018

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, has continued the record growth of the Labor and Employment Practice Group, by attracting 13 labor and employment lawyers in seven months. Those include partners Zachary Bulthuis, Michelle Lee Flores and Jeffrey Horton Thomas, all of whom join the Los Angeles office, in addition to [Jeffrey Kimmel](#) in New York and Jessica Travers in Jacksonville, Fla.

The lawyers represent a continuation of the growth momentum the Labor and Employment Practice Group has seen in recent years. Since 2016, the team's headcount has more than doubled in size from 21 to 50 lawyers in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Texas, Washington, D.C. and across Florida. Their arrival enhances the firm's national capabilities for employers involved in multi-district wage and hour and whistleblower litigation, as well as class and collective actions filed under the Fair Labor Standards Act and other federal, state and local statutes.

"We are dedicated to growing our capabilities for clients in areas where they need us most," said [Eric Gordon](#), chair of the Labor and Employment Practice Group. "Employers today are faced with a new set of uncertainties brought on by significant shifts in U.S. employment and immigration policies. The

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expansion of our team in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and across Florida advances our ability to problem-solve on the ground with our clients while serving their interests nationally.”

Zachary Bulhuis

A versatile lawyer with experience litigating employment, commercial and intellectual property disputes, Bulhuis focuses his practice on representing management in labor and employment disputes. His clientele is diverse, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to local businesses and individuals.

Bulhuis has extensive courtroom experience, and has obtained success for his clients in both alternative dispute resolution and trial settings. His work includes litigation of, and advice on, wage and hour, California’s Private Attorney General Act (PAGA), trade secret, reimbursement and unfair competition claims arising from employment relationships. Bulhuis frequently provides outside general counsel services on myriad legal and business issues, including advising on licensing and employment policies and disputes, and advice and preparation of a wide range of contracts.

Michelle Lee Flores

Lee Flores is an employment litigation and consulting lawyer with deep experience handling jury and bench trials, arbitration, mediation and pre-litigation negotiations involving sex, race, religion, age and disability harassment and discrimination, and wage and hour violations, including class actions and wrongful termination. Lee Flores, a nationally recognized employment advisor, counsels clients on employment compliance, internal investigations, discipline, terminations, reductions in force, wage and hour matters and cannabis in the workplace. She formulates and guides clients on workplace policies and procedures manuals, drug testing policies, employment contracts and separation agreements, and harassment and discrimination prevention policies, including

preventive counseling and in-house training. Regarded as a thought leader on employment matters, Lee Flores has been quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Economist*, *Variety*, *Fast Company*, *Corporate Counsel*, *SHRM* and *Law360*, among others. Lee Flores has received many honors and recognitions, most recently she was voted for the fifth year in a row as a Southern *California Super Lawyer*.

Active in the community and across prominent professional organizations, Lee Flores also leads the efforts of several business and civic institutions. Those include her involvement as trustee of the boards of the Mexican American Bar Foundation and the University of California Press Foundation, among many others.

Jeffrey Horton Thomas

From Fortune 500 corporations to mid-market employers, Horton Thomas focuses his practice on representing employers and management in all aspects of California and federal employment law before state and federal courts and administrative agencies. He regularly defends employers on issues involving discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, disability accommodation, wage and hour, and PAGA lawsuits and administrative actions. His clients span various sectors including hospitality, technology, retail, professional services, manufacturing and apparel. Clients value his aggressive approach and mature judgment in defending litigation.

On the thought leadership front, Horton Thomas also has served as a contributing employment law editor to *Modern Restaurant Management* magazine and is a regular legal guest on *KABC Talk Radio's* "So, What's Your Problem."

Jeffrey Kimmel

With a diverse national practice focusing on employment law and complex commercial litigation, Kimmel represents clients in federal and state

courts, as well as in various arbitration forums and before federal, state and local administrative bodies. His clients operate across multiple sectors, including technology, entertainment, hospitality, real estate, insurance and financial services and range in size from small, closely held companies to publicly traded corporations with thousands of employees. Kimmel routinely represents management in matters relating to wage and hour violations, wrongful termination and anti-discrimination and regularly counsels employers on day-to-day human resources and legal compliance issues.

Kimmel represents high level executives in connection with the negotiation of employment contracts and compensation packages. Kimmell also works with many high net worth and high profile individuals on employment related matters to limit personal exposure arising from their direct or indirect employment relationships.

Jessica Travers

Travers focuses her practice on helping large and small employers avoid and resolve conflicts with employees. She is an experienced litigator handling a variety of intricate employment issues, including overtime and minimum wage, discrimination and retaliation, whistleblowing, workplace harassment, employee leave and reasonable accommodations, employee class and collective actions, and non-compete and breach of contract claims. Her clients span various industries, including the hospitality, retail, transportation and energy sectors.

Travers' representation of employers occurs before federal and state agencies, state and federal courts, the courts of appeal and arbitral forums. Whether the matter is small or complex, she brings the same amount of subject-matter expertise, efficiency, tenacity and experience to reach the best resolution for the client. Travers understands litigation can be costly and burdensome for companies. Thus, she believes litigation avoidance is key to her clients' overall success and uses her extensive litigation

experience to counsel employers on implementing lawful policies, handling workplace conflicts within the law and mitigating workforce risks. Travers is also a frequent speaker on these topics.

Akerman's Labor and Employment Practice Group also has recently welcomed associates Zoe Bekas and Steven Gallagher and Jade Brewster in Los Angeles, Chris Eby in Denver, Tiffany Hendricks in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Melissa Overbeck in New York, Sasha Segall in West Palm Beach, Fla. and Paul Rutigliano in New York. They bring experience in employment litigation and counseling for employers.

About Akerman

Akerman LLP is a top 100 U.S. law firm recognized by *Financial Times* as among the most forward thinking firms in the industry. Its more than 700 lawyers and business professionals collaborate with the world's most successful enterprises and entrepreneurs to navigate change, seize opportunities, and overcome barriers to innovation and growth. Akerman is known for its results in middle market M&A and complex disputes, and for helping clients achieve their most important business objectives in the financial services, real estate, and other dynamic sectors across the United States and Latin America.

Akerman's Labor and Employment Practice Group defends employers throughout the United States in all types of litigation under federal, state and local employment laws, including the Fair Labor Standards Act. Adept at class and collective actions defense, the group represents clients in connection with employment law compliance, collective bargaining and NLRB proceedings, ADA public access, global workforce issues, immigration, and non-compete and trade secret advice.