

Overview

Steptoe & Johnson's Employee Benefits Team designs creative, timely, and cost-effective solutions to align with each client's objectives. Our team has expertise relating to a broad scope of benefit programs for for-profit, nonprofit and governmental employers, including retirement and health plans, deferred compensation, equity compensation, bonus plans and fringe benefit programs. Our seasoned ERISA attorneys have extensive experience in advising our clients on tax and non-tax compliance issues affecting their employee benefit programs, representing our clients in front of government agencies, like the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Department of Labor (DOL), and Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), in connection with voluntary corrections, audits and other administrative proceedings; and defending our clients in benefit claim and fiduciary litigation involving such programs.

Our attorneys are ideally suited to assist with every phase in the life cycle of our clients' benefit programs, including plan design and implementation, ongoing administrative compliance, and plan termination. Our Employee Benefits Team also provides practical guidance to our clients on using employee benefit programs to achieve succession planning, reductions in force and similar company-wide initiatives. They work closely with our clients who are contemplating a future sale of the company, or are working towards the closing of transaction, and need to ensure compliance for the applicable benefit programs.

Team members are located throughout the country, and they collaborate with other Steptoe & Johnson attorneys to best serve our clients through individualized counseling that seeks to achieve our clients' objectives.

Representative Experience

- Assisted a manufacturing client with navigating an Affordable Care Act (ACA) notice with a proposed multimillion-dollar penalty, resulting in a final penalty of less than \$10,000
- Successfully kept a client out of a threatened action in federal court in a contentious DOL health plan audit
- Represented clients with underfunded retirement plans in early negotiations with the PBGC to facilitate successful transactions without government interference

- Represented a large international transportation company in connection with a divestiture of its U.S.-based operations
- Redesigned and assisted with the implementation of the organization-wide employee benefits structure of an international not-for-profit organization
- Advised higher education clients on the employee benefits impacts of reductions in force, including voluntary and involuntary severance arrangements
- Participated in labor negotiations for clients regarding benefits issues, including ACA matters
- Advised Houston-based nonprofit hospital on general employee benefits compliance matters related to defined benefit plan, defined contribution plans, deferred compensation plans, health and welfare plans and on-site clinic
- Advised large Dallas-based nonprofit hospital system on executive employment contracts and deferred compensation compliance matters
- Advised Dallas-based physician group on controlled group issues related to employee benefit compliance matters with physician-owned clinics and joint ventures
- Advised Fort Worth-based physician group on general employee benefit compliance matters and implementation of management organization structure with national service provider
- Advised nonprofit organizations on compliance matters for executive compensation and general employee benefit compliance matters
- Advised Texas-based water authority on compliance matters related to retirement plans

Highlights

- Plain talk and value. We don't just cite code; we listen to our clients and then craft real-world solutions to advance their goals — all in plain English
- Our pragmatic approach and cost structure allow Steptoe & Johnson's Employee Benefits Team to provide exemplary service at a reasonable price
- Proactively teach and train clients to support best practices and minimize exposure

Statutory Compliance

Provided guidance to clients under the following statutes:

- Affordable Care Act (ACA)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

- Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)
- Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA)
- Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)
- Internal Revenue Code
- Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA)



Lori T. Oliphant

Team Leader

(214) 251-8421

lori.oliphant@steptoe-johnson.com