



Katherine A. Baier

Partner

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Practice Emphasis

Labor & Employment Law	Employee Benefits
School Law	Workplace Investigations
Nonprofit Counsel	Crisis Management
Compliance Counsel	Dispute Resolution

About Katherine

Katherine Baier is an attorney at Peterson Russell Kelly Livengood, where she brings more than a decade of experience advising employers of all sizes in each stage of the recruitment, management, and separation of personnel. Her practice focuses on labor and employment law, retention/recruitment efforts and compensation structures, employee benefits, policy issues, compliance matters, agency enforcement actions, and education law. Katherine advises her clients by taking a practical approach and with an emphasis on proactive counseling and risk management.

From the beginning of her career, Katherine has centered her work on serving public entities—a focus driven by her desire to help organizations that serve their communities. “One of the best pieces of advice I received as a law student,” she says, “was that you want to like your clients. That’s always been true for me. The people I work with are passionate about their work product, their business, and their long-term goals. I want to help them achieve those objectives, too.”

Katherine frequently serves as outside general counsel to school districts and other employers, advising on matters ranging from internal investigations and employee training to policy development and media strategy. She also has extensive experience supporting boards, developing collective bargaining strategies, and guiding organizations through complex legal and PR challenges.

Katherine recently relocated to Seattle from Des Moines, Iowa, where she was a shareholder at a leading law firm and routinely provide professional development to schools, cities, and counties. She served as a faculty member for the Iowa Superintendents Finance & Leadership Consortium and was a frequent speaker for the Iowa Association of School Business Officials.

Supporting Schools, Public Entities & Private Employers

Katherine built a career around serving the legal needs of educational institutions, counties, and municipalities. She advises elected boards, superintendents, and human resources teams on a wide range of employment-related issues—from day-to-day personnel matters to high-stakes internal investigations. Her work includes guiding clients through complex special education compliance and dispute resolution, ensuring alignment with public records and open meetings laws, and developing legally sound employee benefit and retention strategies. Katherine also assists with collective bargaining and contract interpretation, helping employers navigate negotiations with clarity and confidence.

Her representative matters reflect the depth and breadth of her experience. In *C.B. v. Johnston CSD*, she handled an IDEA appeal involving a tuition reimbursement claim in which the public school district prevailed. In *Bohn v. CRCSD*, she secured a judgment for the defendant public corporations on the merits.

She also served as local counsel and supported key depositions in *Winterstein v. Ferrara Candy Co.*, a federal employment law case.

Crisis Management and Media Strategy

Katherine is a trusted advisor when organizations face public scrutiny or controversy. She provides calm, clear, and strategic guidance—drafting press releases, advising on media response, and helping clients maintain compliance and confidence in the public eye. Katherine's background in corporate communications and previous roles as a contributor for the Associate Press, CBS Radio News, and other Gannett and Dotdash Meredith groups has uniquely positioned her to advise clients amidst national, local, or social media attention.

Experience & Credentials

Prior to joining Peterson Russell Kelly Livengood, Katherine was a shareholder at Ahlers & Cooney, P.C., a respected Des Moines-based law firm, where she spent more than ten years representing cities, counties, and school districts throughout Iowa. In that role, Katherine served as outside general counsel to many of her clients—advising on everything from collective bargaining and deferred compensation programs, to internal investigations, crisis response, and media strategy.

She has developed policies, conducted complex workplace investigations, provided board governance counsel, and supported HR teams with compliance and training. Katherine is particularly skilled at helping organizations navigate sensitive moments with clarity and confidence, including crafting press releases and guiding public communications during high-profile issues. Her experience also includes defending employers in administrative hearings and contested case proceedings, and coordinating strategy with litigation counsel.

She earned her J.D. from the University of Iowa College of Law and holds a B.A., magna cum laude, in Journalism and Mass Communication from Drake University. Katherine is admitted to practice in all Iowa state courts, as well as the U.S. District Courts for the Northern and Southern Districts of Iowa and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. She is in the process of being admitted to the Washington State Bar.

An active member of the legal community, Katherine has held leadership positions in several professional organizations. She served as Vice Chair of the Iowa Council of School Board Attorneys and sat on the Executive Committee. She is a longtime member of the National School Boards Association's Council of School Attorneys and has served on the board of the Polk County Women Attorneys for nearly a decade, including as President in 2023.

Personal Interests

Outside of work, Katherine enjoys yoga, creative cooking, and exploring the outdoors with her 70lb dog, Indie. She's an avid cyclist and gardener, and never misses her annual siblings' trip—a tradition that keeps her grounded and connected.

Presentations & Trainings

A sought-after speaker and educator, Katherine is known for delivering engaging, practical sessions to HR professionals, school officials, county administrators, and municipal leaders. She has presented at local, state, and national conferences on topics ranging from employment law and employee benefits to special education and school governance.

Her presentations and trainings include:

- **“Beginner FMLA/ADA/Pregnant Workers Act” and “Top 10: Hot Topics + Case Law Update Panel”**, Ahlers Employment Law Seminar, November 2024
- **“Legislative Updates and Top Legal Issues in Special Education”**, with C. Weber, June 2024
- **“Accommodating Employees with Physical and Mental Health Differences”**, Iowa Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), March 2024
- **“1099’s, W2’s, Fringe Benefits”**, Iowa State Association of Counties, Auditors Affiliate, August 2023
- **“Recruit and Retain: Employee Incentives and Early Retirement”**, with E. Ellingson, September 2023
- **“Hot Topics: Employment Law”**, with E. Heffernan, Iowa Municipal Attorneys Association, November 2021
- **“Hot Topics in Human Resources – Part I & II”**, Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) Annual Conference, August 2021
- **“Human Resource Panel”**, ISAC Spring Conference, March 2021
- **“Human Resources for County Officials”**, ISAC New Officer’s School, January 2021
- **“Navigating the Changing Landscape of Progress Monitoring During and After the Pandemic”**, LRP Publications, National Webinar, January 2021
- **“HR 202: How to Effectively Manage Public Employees”**, ISAC, August 2019
- **“Social Media, the Workplace, and Employee Speech – Do’s and Don’ts for Public Employers”**, Iowa Municipal Professionals Academy, July 2019
- **“Special Education Law for Lawyers Who Do Not Practice Special Education”**, Polk County Bar Association, General Practice CLE, April 2019
- **“Developing Legally Compliant IEPs That Benefit Students”**, National Business Institute, March 2019
- **Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Ordered Client 504 Training**
- **Iowa Department of Education Ordered Extended School Year Services Training**
- **Onsite Employer Handbook Policies & HR Management Trainings**

Whether speaking to a room of seasoned administrators or those new to management, Katherine brings energy, clarity, and deep subject matter knowledge to every presentation.

Education

- > J.D., University of Iowa Law School
- > B.A., Drake University
 - o *magna cum laude*

Bar Admissions

- > Iowa (All State Courts)
- > U.S. District Court – Southern & Northern Districts of Iowa
- > U.S. Court of Appeals – 8th Circuit
- > Washington (Application in Progress)

Professional Associations

- > American Bar Association
- > Iowa State Bar Association
- > Polk County Bar Association
- > Polk County Women Attorneys (Board Member; President 2023)
- > National School Boards Association – Council of School Attorneys
- > Iowa Council of School Board Attorneys (Vice Chair, 2024)