Leslie C. Behaunek

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DES MOINES OFFICE

Leslie Behaunek is Of Counsel at the firm, where she practices primarily in the areas of business litigation and appeals. She is also a full-time Assistant Professor at Drake University Law School, where she teaches Torts and related upper-level courses.

For two years after law school, Leslie honed her skills as a judicial clerk for the Honorable James E. Gritzner on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa. She followed that with a one-year clerkship with the Honorable Jane Kelly on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. The opportunity to work on a wide variety of cases and see quality written and oral advocacy as a judicial clerk allowed Leslie to immediately put the things she learned into practice upon joining the firm.

During her time at Nyemaster, Leslie has litigated a variety of cases, including: finance lease enforcement matters; bankruptcy matters on behalf of creditors and Trustees; class actions; ERISA life, health, and disability benefits cases; ERISA and breach of fiduciary actions; health care and labor and employment claims, and general commercial disputes. Leslie previously served as chair of the Firm's Appellate Practice Group and provides appellate representation before the Iowa appellate courts as well as the Eighth Circuit.

Leslie taught at Drake University Law School in an adjunct faculty role from 2023-2026 and has been a full-time Assistant Professor at Drake since 2026. Leslie also currently serves as Chair of the Iowa State Bar Association Federal Practice Committee and Secretary for the Historical Society for the U.S. Courts in the Eight Circuit - Southern District of Iowa Branch.

RECOGNITION

The Best Lawyers in America®
Appellate Practice, 2026–2027

Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch
Appellate Practice, 2021–2025

Great Plains Super Lawyers
Rising Stars, 2018–2026

***Des Moines Business Record* Forty Under 40**
Honoree, 2018

Phi Beta Kappa

Dwight D. Opperman Scholar

Order of the Coif

The Order of the Barristers



PRACTICE AREAS

- Litigation
- Appellate Practice
- Banks & Financial Institution Litigation
- Business & Commercial Litigation
- Class Actions
- Creditor Rights & Bankruptcy
- Employment, Labor & Discrimination
- ERISA Litigation
- Estate, Trust & Fiduciary Litigation
- Health Care Litigation
- Life & Disability Insurance Litigation

EDUCATION

- Cornell College (B.A., summa cum laude, with honors)
- Drake University (J.D., with highest honors)

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Iowa
- Admitted to practice in all state and federal courts in Iowa
- Admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court
- Admitted to practice before the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals
- Admitted to practice before the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Adjunct Professor, Conflict of Laws, Drake Law School (2023, 2024)

Moot Court Board
President

National Moot Court Team

Rodney L. Hudson Senior Advocacy Award

Jeffrey and Elizabeth Goodman Distinguished Advocate Award

Eight American Jurisprudence Awards

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

American Bar Association
Bar Leadership Institute, 2016

DRI, Defense Research Institute

IWIRC, International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation
- IWIRC Midwest Network Membership Chair, 2022–2025
- Member, 2020–2025

Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference
- 2023 Conference Planning Committee Liaison for the Southern District of Iowa
- 2021 Conference Planning Committee Liaison for the Southern District of Iowa
- 2020 Conference Planning Committee Liaison for the Southern District of Iowa

Historical Society for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa
- Secretary, 2021-present

Iowa State Bar Association
- Federal Practice Committee, 2016–present
  - Chair, 2020-present
  - Vice-Chair, 2019–2020
  - Diversity Taskforce, 2018–2019
- Public Relations Committee, 2016–2021; Chair, 2017–2019
- Young Lawyers Division
  - Communications, Chair, 2013–2017
  - Diversity Committee, 2014–2016
  - Mentoring Taskforce, 2014–2016
- Young Lawyer Fast Action Taskforce, 2015–2016

Polk County Bar Association

Polk County Women Attorneys
- Past-President, 2018
- President, 2017
- President-Elect, 2016
- Communications, Chair, 2015
- Annual CLE, Co-Chair, 2014
- Professional Development, Co-Chair, 2013
- Basket Auction, Co-Chair, 2012

Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys
2012–present

C. Edwin Moore Inn of Court

- Law Clerk, Hon. Jane Kelly, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- Law Clerk, Hon. James E. Gritzner, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa
- Judicial Intern, Hon. James E. Gritzner, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa
- Student Intern, State of Iowa Appellate Defender's Office

- Community Outreach Committee, 2015–2016
- Associate Member, 2012–2017

Emerge Iowa
- Development Committee Chair, 2021
- Board Chair, 2018–2020
- Organizing Committee, 2017–2018

Des Moines Choral Society
- Past-President of the Board, 2018–2019
- President of the Board, 2016–2018
- Vice President of Community Outreach, 2015–2016
- Board Member, 2012–2014, 2015–2019

Cornell College
- Stoll Program for Law & Society, Alumnae Member, 2009–present
- Young Alumni Advisory Committee, Chair, 2014–2016

Iowa American Legion Auxiliary Girls State
- Government Staff, 2011–2014, 2017–2018
- Counselor, 2005–2007

Iowa American Legion Auxiliary Girls State Alumnae Association
- Board Member, 2011–2022
- Secretary, 2017–2018
- Secretary-Treasurer, 2014–2017

Women Lead Change
Central Iowa WLC Conference Student Track Committee, 2015

Simpson College
Host family for international student, 2015–2018

SIGNIFICANT CASES

In re: Simply Essentials, LLC, Case No. 22-2011 (Eighth Circuit, August 21, 2023). Represented purchaser of Chapter 5 causes of action in Chapter 7 Bankruptcy on appeal.

Vroegh v. Iowa Department of Corrections et al, Iowa Supreme Court No. 20-0484 (Iowa 2022). Affirmance of summary judgment decision in favor of insurance company in case alleging violation of the Iowa Civil Rights Act.

Ronald Rumsey v. Woodgrain Millwork, Inc. d/b/a Windsor Windows and Doors et al., Iowa Supreme Court No. 20-0135 (Iowa 2021). Overturning jury verdict for disability discrimination under the ICRA against employer because employee injured at work did not establish there was another job he could perform based on his lifting restriction.

GreatAmerica v. Natalya Rodionova Medical Care, P.C., No. 19-0491 (Iowa 2021). Vacating court of appeals decision and affirming district court's summary judgment decision in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

***In re VeroBlue Farms USA, Inc.*, Case No. 18-01297 (N.D. Iowa Bankruptcy Court 2019-2021).** Represented Liquidating Trustee in Chapter 11 Bankruptcy and related adversary cases.

***In re: Fansteel Foundry Corporation*, Case No. 20-6005 (U.S. Bankruptcy Appellate**

Panel for the Eighth Circuit, August 7, 2020). Represented Liquidating Trustee in Chapter 11 Bankruptcy on appeal.

GreatAmerica v. Monge & Associates, No. 18-1233 (Iowa Ct. App., August 7, 2019). Affirmance of summary judgment decision in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

Venditti v. Unum Life Insurance Company et al. – No. 18-cv-25 (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Iowa, January 17, 2019). Judgment upholding decision of life insurance company in ERISA appeal.

United States et al. v. Crawford County Memorial Hospital et al. – No. 5:15-cv-4034 (U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa, December 6, 2017). Partial dismissal and complete summary judgment for hospital in qui tam / False Claims Act case; upheld on appeal by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals (No. 18-1022).

GreatAmerica v. Joan Dachs – No. LACV088300 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Linn Cnty. November 8, 2018). Summary judgment in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

Krapf v. Board of Regents et al. – No. CVCV052002 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Polk Cnty. October 28, 2017). Summary judgment for individual regents regarding the application of the Open Meetings Law; upheld on appeal by the Iowa Court of Appeals (No. 17-1745).

GreatAmerica v. Plymouth Life Incorporated – No. LACV038102 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Plymouth Cnty. October 2, 2018). Summary judgment in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

GreatAmerica v. Hills Drug Store, Inc. – No. LACV088818 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Linn Cnty. September 20, 2018). Summary judgment in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

GreatAmerica v. Sneider – No. LACV089233 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Linn Cnty. September 17, 2018). Summary judgment in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

GreatAmerica v. Lane – No. LACV088779 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Linn Cnty. July 17, 2018). Summary judgment in favor of finance lease company in breach of contract case.

Coleman v. Select Specialty Hospital - Des Moines, Inc. **No. LACL134824 (Iowa Dist. Ct. for Polk Cnty. July 5, 2017).** Judgment for employer following bench trial in action alleging violation of Iowa Drug Testing Act.

Baldwin v. Global Atlantic Financial Group – No. 2:16-cv-00202 (U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, February 23, 2017). Dismissal of suit in federal court in Utah due to forum non conveniens.

ARAG N. America, Inc. v. Turjanica, **Case No. LACL133599 (Iowa Dist. Ct. 2015)**. Granted motion for temporary injunction enforcing noncompetition agreement and prohibiting former employee from working for competitor or misappropriating trade secrets.

State v. Mootz, **808 N.W.2d 207 (Iowa 2012).** Reversal and remand for new trial based on Iowa Supreme Court's holding that improper denial of a criminal defendant's peremptory strike based on a reverse-*Batson* challenge is presumptively prejudicial and requires automatic reversal.

***State v. Robinson*, 817 N.W.2d 495 (Iowa Ct. App. 2012)**. Reversal and remand for entry of dismissal due to violation of the speedy indictment rule.

SPEECHES & PUBLICATIONS

Collaboration and Civics Education: United States Magistrate Judge Helen Adams' Vision as President of the Federal Magistrate Judges Association
Iowa Lawyer, July 2026 Issue (Author)

Lessons Learned from a Former Hawkeye Girls State Citizen
Iowa American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, June 18, 2025 (Speaker)

Counterclaim Preclusion: Foreseeability, Finality, and Fairness

Dickinson Law Review, October 2025 (Author)

Paying it Forward: Mentoring in the Legal Profession
IWIRC Midwest CLE, October 3, 2025 (Co-speaker with Judge Anita Shodeen, Chief Judge Laura Kulm Ask, Judge Cynthia Norton, Judge Kathy Surratt-States, Sam Marks, and Ashley Wieck)

Pretrial Advice for Litigating Cases in Federal Court
Iowa Lawyer, July 2025 Issue (Co-Author with U.S. Magistrate Judge William Kelly)

Motions for Summary Judgment: Perspectives from Federal and State Court
Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting (Co-speaker with Judge Stephen Locher and Judge Jeffrey Farrell)

Top 20 Countdown: Advice for Litigating Cases in Federal Court
Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, June 24, 2025 (Co-speaker with U.S. Magistrate Judge William Kelly)

Advice From a Former Hawkeye Girls State Citizen
Iowa American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, June 15, 2025 (Speaker)

Experiential Learning at its Best: The Benefits of Interning for a U.S. Magistrate Judge
Iowa Lawyer, May 2025 Issue (Co-Author with U.S. Magistrate Judge Helen Adams, Erin Lain, and Erin Stender)

What Employers Should Know About the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Virtual Client Webinar, May 28, 2025 (Co-speaker

with Fran Haas)

Motion Practice Do's and Don'ts and Local Rules
Iowa State Bar Association Fundamentals of Federal Practice CLE, May 9, 2025 (Co-speaker with U.S. Magistrate Judge Kelly Mahoney)

Civility in the Legal Profession
Iowa State Bar Association Commercial and Bankruptcy Law Seminar, May 8, 2025 (Speaker)

Appellate Practice in Iowa and the Eighth Circuit
Nyemaster Litigation Associate Presentation, April 17, 2025 (Speaker)

Top 20 Countdown: Advice for Litigating Cases in Federal Court
Iowa State Bar Association Litigation Excellence Series, April 2, 2025 (Co-speaker with U.S. Magistrate Judge William Kelly)

Government Records and Third-Party Subpoenas: Response Strategies From a Defense Lawyer
Iowa Association of Justice Personal Injury Seminar, March 4, 2025 (Speaker)

Saying more with less: How to write succinctly yet persuasively in legal briefs
Iowa Lawyer, December 2024 / January 2025 Issue (Co-Author with Matthew McGuire)

Iowa Supreme Court Business
Iowa State Bar Association Corporate Counsel and Trade Regulation Seminar, September 27, 2024 (Co-speaker with Logan Eliasen)

We Are Expecting! The New Pregnancy Accommodation Regulations
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Seminar, July 10, 2024 (Speaker)

Quarried Truths: An Artist's Vision Brought to Life in the New Federal Courthouse
Iowa Lawyer, April 2024 Issue (Author)

Reflections from the Bench
Iowa Lawyer, December 2023/January 2024 Issue (Author)

Serving With Integrity: An Interview with the Honorable William Kelly
Iowa Lawyer, December 2023/January 2024 (Author)

Gender Transitioning: Workplace and Insurance Obligations and Best Practices
Client CLE, December 11, 2023 (Speaker)

Law & The Workplace: Pre-Litigation Document Retention
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Virtual Client Webinar, November 16, 2023 (Co-speaker with Dana Hempy)

Broadcasting Civil and Criminal Proceedings
Eighth Circuit Judicial Conference, July 13, 2023 (Moderator of panel including Chief Justice Susan Christensen, Judge Peter Cahill, and Professor Timothy Johnson)

Appeal: Strategy Regarding Appeals Before the Eighth Circuit and the United States Supreme Court
Iowa State Bar Association Federal Practice Webinar Series, October 26, 2022 (panelist with Judge Michael Melloy and Angela Campbell; panel moderated by Megan Flynn)

Improving Civility and Professionalism in the Legal Profession
Polk County Women Attorneys, August 31, 2022 (co-speaker with Magistrate Judge Celeste Bremer)

How to Cross-Examine a Witness
ABI-Central States, June 24 and 25, 2022 (panelist with Judge James Ahler, Judge Brett Ludwig, Brittany Ogden, and Amy Swedberg)

Navigating Social Media Discovery: What Judges Need to Know About How Lawyers Should Deal with Mass Deletion of Social Media History
Federal Magistrate Judges Association Bulletin, June 2022 (co-author with Judge Helen Adams and Philip Favro)

Navigating Social Media Discovery: Steps Counsel Can Take to Address Mass Deletion of Social Media History
Iowa Lawyer, June 2022 (co-author with Judge Helen Adams and Philip Favro).

Miranda-Type Warning Not Required for Pat-Down Searches, Iowa Supreme Court Rules
On Brief, April 29, 2022,

Leaving a legacy: An interview with the Honorable Celeste F. Bremer
Iowa Lawyer, December 2021/January 2022.

Article III Judges Panel
Federal Practice Seminar, 2021 (moderator)

Navigating the Challenges of ESI Discovery: Applying Lessons Learned from DR Distributors v. 21 Century Smoking
Federal Practice Seminar, 2021 (panelist)

An Open Book: Social Media and COVID-Related Discovery Issues in Litigation
Women in eDiscovery CLE, 2021 (speaker)

Panel Discussion Regarding Attorney Service on Boards and Commissions
Women's In-House Counsel Group in Omaha, NE March 18, 2021 (panelist with Lisa Bertrand)

Remote Working, Social Media, and Discovery: Exploring Future Litigation Issues
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Winter Seminar January 7, 2021 (speaker)

Cooperation and Corporate Representative Depositions: Exploring the New 'Meet and Confer' Requirement in Revised FRCP 30(b)(6)
Iowa Lawyer, March 2021 issue (co-author)

Diversity & Ethics Panel
Iowa State Bar Association Federal Practice Seminar, 2020 (panelist)

An Open Book: Social Media and COVID-Related Discovery Issues in Litigation
Polk County Bar Association Solo and Small Firm Section, 2020 (speaker)

Federal Practice with Panel of Attorneys with Less than 15 Years of Practice
Iowa State Bar Association Fundamentals of Federal Practice Seminar, 2020 (panelist)

Gender Bias, Discrimination, and Harassment in the Iowa Legal Profession
Polk County Women Attorneys Annual CLE, 2020 (speaker)

An Open Book: Social Media and COVID-Related Discovery Issues in Litigation
Iowa Paralegal Association Annual Seminar, 2020 (speaker)

Advancing Diversity in the Workplace
Iowa State Bar Association Corporate Counsel and Trade Regulation Seminar, 2020 (panelist)

An Open Book: Social Media and COVID-Related Discovery Issues in Litigation
Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, 2020 (speaker)

Gender Matters: How practitioners and judges can address and eliminate bias, harassment and discrimination in the Iowa legal profession
Iowa Lawyer, Feb. 2020 issue

Gender Transitioning in the Workplace: Employer Obligations and Best Practices
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Seminar, 2019 (speaker)

An Open Book: Social Media Discovery Issues in Litigation
Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, 2019 (speaker)

Professional Development Panel
Polk County Women Attorneys November 13, 2018 (panelist with Elizabeth Coonan, Anjela Shutts, and Victoria Herring)

Gender Matters: An ongoing search for practical solutions to address and eliminate bias, harassment, discrimination in the Iowa legal profession
Iowa Lawyer, Nov. 2018 issue (co-author)

Gender and the Courts
Iowa ABOTA Annual CLE, 2018 (co-speaker)

Improving Civility and Professionalism in the Legal Profession
Polk County Women Attorneys, 2018 (speaker)

Gender Matters: Practical Solutions for Tackling Bias & Unprofessional Conduct in the Iowa Legal Profession
Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, 2018 (panelist and moderator)

#MeToo: A Panel Discussion About Employers' Responses to Allegations of Sexual Harassment
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Seminar, 2018 (panelist)

Where Are We Now: A Legislative & Regulatory Review
Nyemaster Labor & Employment Seminar, 2018 (speaker)

Strategies to Prevent Hazing on Campus
Nyemaster Higher Education Seminar, 2018 (speaker)

Gender Bias, Discrimination, and Harassment in the Iowa Legal Profession
Polk County Women Attorneys Annual CLE, 2018 (co-speaker)

Lawyer Well-Being
C. Edwin Moore Inn of Court, 2018 (co-speaker)

#MeToo—Where Do We Go From Here?
Central Iowa SHRM, 2018 (speaker)

Gender Matters: Tackling Bias & Unprofessional Conduct Toward Attorneys, Part II
Iowa State Bar Association Federal Practice Seminar, 2017 (presentation coordinator)

The Proposed Changes to Model Rule 8.4(g)
Iowa State Bar Association Labor & Employment Seminar, 2017 (panelist)

Improving Civility and Professionalism in the Legal Profession
Polk County Women Attorneys, 2017 (co-speaker)

Gender Matters: Tackling Bias & Unprofessional Conduct Toward Attorneys, Part I
Iowa State Bar Association Federal Practice and Polk County Women Attorneys Joint CLE, 2017 (moderator)

Update on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues in the Workplace
SHRM, client presentations, 2016, 2017 (speaker)

Student debt: A battle young attorneys cannot fight alone.
Iowa Lawyer, Sept. 2016 issue (author)

You're a Lawyer, You Should Know Better: Anecdotal Tales of Workplace Inappropriateness
Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, 2015 (presentation coordinator)

Advice from the Bench to Advocates and Future Advocates
Polk County Women Attorneys, 2014 (panelist)