



Shelley R. Smith

Partner

Civil Rights Defense & Constitutional Litigation /

Business Litigation



215.246.3127



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Overview

Shelley is Archer's Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and a partner in the firm's Business Litigation and Labor and Employment Groups. She is a frequent speaker and writer about diversity and the related constitutional issues. She has written about the evolution of the law of affirmative action in the educational context and is a frequent speaker on the post-2023 diversity landscape.

In addition to her Diversity work, Shelley counsels clients in commercial litigation and labor and employment matters. Shelley has experience litigating a wide variety of cases before federal and state courts and administrative agencies. Shelley has handled cases involving discrimination and harassment allegations, including Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act. In addition, Shelley has represented clients in matters regarding unlawful discipline, wrongful discharge, unfair labor practice issues, and whistleblower claims. Shelley also handles collective bargaining issues, including private and public sector union negotiations and grievance arbitrations.

Shelley also provides day-to-day advice and counsel to personnel and human resource departments with respect to the numerous labor and employment matters which arise from daily operations. Shelley is often called upon to review employee handbooks and manuals for Pennsylvania businesses, not only from a legal, but also from a human relations perspective. She assists such professionals in establishing and implementing policies, procedures and decisions regarding all aspects of the employment relationship, including hiring, firing, promotions, compensation, benefits, leaves, reasonable accommodations, and the investigation of harassment and discrimination claims.

Shelley counsels employers regarding compliance with federal and state disability laws, Civil Service Rules and Regulations, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), and state and local employment practice acts. She also assists clients with hiring and termination processes, as well as purchasing and procurement matters.

Shelley joined Archer following a distinguished career in public service for the City of Philadelphia, most recently serving eight years as City Solicitor during Michael Nutter's mayoral tenure. She represented the Mayor, City Council, all City elected officials, all City employees, Agencies, Boards, and Commissions. Shelley is the City of Philadelphia's longest-serving City Solicitor. During her tenure with the City's Law Department, she handled nearly every facet of the Law Department's practice in some capacity, including managing the City's Labor & Employment Unit. Matters under her supervision involved the defense of labor grievances and employment discrimination cases initiated in state and federal courts and administrative agencies, as well as managing the City's collective bargaining and labor negotiations.

As a trial lawyer, Ms. Smith tried more than 60 federal civil jury trials to verdict, as well as hundreds of other litigation and policy matters. Significant matters included the 39th Police District litigation, NAACP v. City of Philadelphia, and the jury trials of Joseph Frazier v. City of Philadelphia, Estate of Shannon Schieber v. City of Philadelphia, and Robert Mitchell v. Mayor John F. Street.

Professional and Community Involvement

- Member, Philadelphia Bar Association
- Member, Pennsylvania Bar Association
- Former Board Member, Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania
- Member, Archer Women Lawyers' Network
- Member, Board of Directors, Women's Law Project
- Former Member, Board of Managers, Moore College of Art and Design
- Past Member, Southeastern Pennsylvania Advisory Board of Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts (2005-2019)
- Past Member, Board of Directors, Support Center for Child Advocates (2017-2020)
- Former Chair, Commission on Judicial Selection and Retention, Philadelphia Bar Association (2007 & 2016)
- Past Member, Commission on Judicial Selection and Retention, Philadelphia Bar Association (2003-2016)
- Former Chair, Board of Directors, Legacy Youth Tennis and Education Center (2013-2015)
- Former Member, Board of Directors, Legacy Youth Tennis and Education Center (2010-2015)



Select Articles

[“In the Face of Affirmative Action: Persisting With Law Firm Diversity Efforts,”](#) *The Legal Intelligencer* (November 2023)

Select Speaking Engagements and Seminars

- “Better, Stronger, Smarter - Building Diverse Teams to Win in Today’s Evolving Landscape,” USC Gould School of Law, Intellectual Property Institute (March 2025)
- “Advocate Like Us,” The National Bar Association, Women Lawyers Division, Philadelphia Chapter (February 2025)
- “Constitution Day: The 14th Amendment, Promise v. Practice, Honorarium,” Saint Joseph’s University (September 2024)
- “Thirty Years of CLE: Evolution of the Law Department,” City of Philadelphia Law Department (August 2024)
- [“The Future of DEI in Legal,”](#) Practising Law Institute Podcast (May 2024)
- “The Future Of DEI,” Philadelphia Bar Association Spring Quarterly Meeting (March 2024)
- “Getting Real in Our New Reality,” New Jersey Business & Industry Association, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Summit (April 2023)
- “Thinking Outside The Box - Perspectives and Practices for Legal Departments to Retain Minority and Women Lawyers as Outside Counsel,” Minority and Women Lawyers’ Business Development Forum, Pennsylvania Bar Association (October 2018)
- “The #MeToo Movement Meets the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017,” OGC University, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (September 2018)
- “Women’s Leadership & Breaking the Glass Ceiling,” African American Chamber of Commerce (May 2018)
- “19th Annual Personal Injury Practicum,” Dispute Resolution Institute (April 2017)
- “2nd Annual Economic Forecast,” Philadelphia Business Journal (January 2017)

In the News

- [“For Midsize Law Firms, Curbing Boys-Club Culture Starts with Diversity at the Top,”](#) *LAW.COM PRO Mid-Market* (November 2024)
- “The Sweet Spot Between Microaggressions and Empty Words: Threading the Needle on Associate Feedback,” *The American Lawyer* (February 2024)
- “How Should Midsize Firms Navigate DEI Landmines?” *LAW.COM* (December 2023)



- “Flashpoint with Cherri Gregg,” KYW Newsradio (March 2020)

Recognitions

- Named to Pennsylvania “Super Lawyers Rising Stars” list for State, Local & Municipal (2005)
- Named to Pennsylvania “Super Lawyers” list for State, Local & Municipal (2009)

Click [here](#) for methodology.

*No aspect of this advertisement has been approved by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

Credentials

Education

- Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, JD
- Temple University, BA

Admissions

- Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania
- New York

Offices

- Philadelphia, PA

Areas of Focus

Practice

- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Business Litigation
- Civil Rights Defense & Constitutional Litigation
- Fractional General Counsel
- Labor & Employment
- State & Local Government

Industries

- Education



