



Joan Fife

Partner
San Francisco Office Managing Partner

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Joan is the managing partner of Winston’s San Francisco office, heads the firm’s San Francisco Labor & Employment Practice, and represents employers throughout the country in class action employment litigation. Clients praise her “very good courtroom demeanor” and describe her as “one of the best attorneys for wage and hour class actions” that is “great at strategy and thinking about the best way to handle things” and knows “when it’s appropriate to be aggressive.”

Joan has more than 35 years of experience as a labor and employment litigator. She has had lead responsibility for over 100 class or collective actions across the country. She has defeated conditional certification in nationwide FLSA actions a number of times, including in claims alleging overtime resulting from alleged off-the-clock work, misclassification of employees, and misclassification of independent contractors. In one collective action, she secured more than US\$800,000 of her client’s attorney’s fees from the individual plaintiffs after prevailing on summary judgment on all counts. She has never had a Rule 23 class certified against any of her clients.

Joan represents employers throughout the country in class action employment litigation and has repeatedly been named one of the *Daily Journal’s* “Top Women Litigators in California” and “Top Labor and Employment Lawyers.”

She was also named to the *San Francisco Business Times*' "Most Influential Women in the Bay Area" and The Recorder's list of "Women Leaders in Law."

For 15 years, Joan has been the lead attorney defending one of the nation's largest financial institutions in numerous wage and hour class and FLSA collective actions in California and across the country. Joan's wage and hour class and collective actions have involved misclassification issues, off-the-clock claims, meal and rest break claims, donning and doffing claims, rounding claims, "seating claims," stand alone PAGA claims, and failure to reimburse claims, among others. She has spent months as trial counsel defending hundreds of individual wage and hour damages claims.

She also has extensive experience conducting investigations in heavily regulated industries, defending whistleblower claims, handling significant employment discrimination claims, and representing companies in trade secret/noncompete litigation.

Recent Experience

Winston Represented Hub Group in its Acquisition of the Final Mile Business of Forward Air Corporation

Trial Win Plus Attorney Fee Award in Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Case

Prevailed on Demurrer and Opposition to Motion for Leave to Amend in Wage and Hour/PAGA Class Action

Denial of Class Certification to a Class of Independent Contractors in Wage & Hour Class Action

Successfully Transferred Matter from Tennessee Federal Court to Pennsylvania Federal Court Following Plaintiffs' Depositions and Opposition to Motion for Class Certification

Achieved Significant Victory When Court Denied Rule 23 Motion to Certify a Class

Voluntary Dismissal of Class and Collective Action in Nationwide Age Discrimination Case

Signed Arbitration Agreements with Class Action Waivers Pushes Wage and Hour Case to Early Mediation

Defeated Plaintiff's Motion to Amend Wage and Hour Class Action Complaint Alleging Improper Rounding

Used Plaintiff's Own Admissions in Deposition to Undercut Plaintiff's Claims in Wage & Hour Class/Collective Action

Recognitions

- *Daily Journal*, “Top Women Litigators in California” and “Top Labor and Employment Lawyers”
 - *Chambers USA*, recognized as a leading lawyer in California labor and employment law
 - *National Law Journal*, Employment Law Trailblazers (2019)
 - *Benchmark Litigation US*, “California Litigation Star” (2020, 2023–2024); “Labor & Employment Star” (2022, 2024)
 - *Lawdragon 500*, Leading Corporate Employment Lawyer’s Guide (2021–2023)
 - *The Legal 500 US*, Labor and Employment Disputes (2013, 2014, 2016–2022)
 - Commended for her ability to shine in “difficult litigation and the most serious internal investigations.” (2016)
 - *American Lawyer Media* and *Martindale-Hubbell* “Top Rated Lawyer” (2013)
 - *The Recorder*, Women Leaders in Law (2012)
 - *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Employment Law – Management and Litigation – Labor & Employment (2016–2024)
 - *Super Lawyers*: Northern California
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Activities

Joan is the managing partner of the San Francisco Office and the head of the San Francisco Labor & Employment Group. She has served on the firm’s Executive Committee, Partner Compensation Committee, Nominating Committee, Hiring Committee, Diversity Committee and Facilities Committee. She has been a member of the Racial Equity Task Force.

Credentials

EDUCATION

Joan graduated from Vanderbilt Law School in 1986, and from Northwestern University, *cum laude*, with a degree in Mathematics and Economics in 1983. She has completed extensive mediation training at Harvard Law School.

ADMISSIONS

- California

Related Insights & News

Joan is regularly invited to speak on wage and hour issues. She has spoken at the ABA Annual Meeting for the Labor and Employment Section, the Silicon Valley “All Hands Meeting,” the Pacific Coast Labor and Employment Law Conference, and the National Employment Law Institute Wage and Hour Meeting. She also holds an annual eLunch on wage and hour issues for clients and colleagues. She has been a speaker at the National Association of Women Lawyers’ Pipeline to Equity Partnership at UC Hastings, the third annual Institute for Advanced Corporate Counsel.

Publications

- [“Why Companies Lose In Gig Worker Class Cert. Cases,”](#) Law360 (November 2022)
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BLOG

Winston’s Women Partners Hone Their Business Development Skills With Sara Holtz and Joan Fife

FEBRUARY 22, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in 2024 *Benchmark Litigation*

OCTOBER 6, 2023

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Partners Recognized in 2024 *Lawdragon* 500 Leading U.S. Corporate Employment Lawyers

SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America*® 2024

AUGUST 17, 2023

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in *Chambers USA* 2023

JUNE 6, 2023

CLIENT ALERT

Ninth Circuit Decides Rate of Vacation Payout To Terminating Employees in California

MAY 15, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Winston & Strawn Adds Two Prominent Class Action Litigators in San Francisco

FEBRUARY 1, 2023

CLIENT ALERT

New Laws and Trends Affecting the Workplace in 2023

JANUARY 23, 2023

ARTICLE

Why Companies Lose In Gig Worker Class Cert. Cases

NOVEMBER 10, 2022

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in 2023 *Benchmark Litigation*

OCTOBER 14, 2022

BLOG

In Coast-to-Coast Rulings, Courts Certify Classes in Worker Misclassification Suits

SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Attorneys Recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America*® 2023

AUGUST 18, 2022

Capabilities

Labor & Employment

Litigation/Trials

Trade Secrets, Non Competes & Restrictive Covenants

Financial Services

Professional Services

Technology, Media & Telecommunications

Insurance