WINSTON & STRAWN LLP

Joan Fife

Partner

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Joan heads the firm's San Francisco Labor & Employment Practice and represents employers throughout the country in class action employment litigation. Joan was recently named *The Best Lawyers in America®* 2025 "Lawyer of the Year" for Employment Law – Management, San Francisco, an honor presented annually to a single, outstanding lawyer in each practice area and designated metropolitan area. 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
- Defeated Class Certification in Wage & Hour Case for MedTech Company
- Prevented Filing of Preliminary Injunction and Motion for Temporary Restraining Order
- 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

Recognitions

- *The Best Lawyers in* America®—
  - "Lawyer of the Year" for Employment Law – Management, San Francisco (2025)
  - Recognized for Employment Law – Management and for Litigation – Labor & Employment (2016–2025)
- *Chambers USA*—Ranked for California: Labor and Employment Law (2014–2024)
- *The Legal 500 US*—
  - Recognized for Labor and Employment Disputes (2013–2022, 2024) and as a "Key Lawyer" (2024)
  - Commended for her ability to shine in "difficult litigation and the most serious internal investigations" (2016)
- *Benchmark Litigation US*—Recognized as a "Litigation Star" (2017–2025), a "Labor & Employment Star" (2022–2025), and a "California Litigation Star" (2025)
- *Lawdragon*—Listed as one of the "500 Leading U.S. Corporate Employment Lawyers" (2021–2023)
- *Daily Journal*—"Top Women Litigators in California" and "Top Labor and Employment Lawyers"
- *National Law Journal*—"Employment Law Trailblazers" (2019)
- *American Lawyer Media* and Martindale-Hubbell—"Top Rated Lawyer" (2013)
- *The Recorder*—"Women Leaders in Law" (2012)
- *Super Lawyers*: Northern California

Activities

Joan heads the firm's San Francisco Labor & Employment Practice and is the chair of the firm's Respectful Workplace Issues Committee. 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
- "Opposing Forces", *Super Lawyers*, July 7, 2021

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in 2025 *Benchmark Litigation*

OCTOBER 3, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Winston Attorneys Recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America®* 2025

AUGUST 15, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in *The Legal 500 U.S.* 2024

JUNE 12, 2024

RECOGNITIONS

Winston & Strawn Recognized in *Chambers USA* 2024

JUNE 6, 2024

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

Capabilities

Labor & Employment | Litigation/Trials | Trade Secrets, Non Competes & Restrictive Covenants | Public Companies | Financial Services | Professional Services | Technology, Media & Telecommunications | Insurance

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