

FORTY UNDER 40 2017

Hinshaw & Culbertson attorney Brette Bensinger has handled many complex labor and employment law cases in both the private and public sectors during her still young career. One case in particular stands out: Bensinger was a key player in helping Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart's Office to become the first entity to ever achieve compliance with the Shakman Decree.

Retired Judge Wayne R. Andersen, who presided over the federal employment consent decree litigation, said of Bensinger: "First, she's an outstanding lawyer." He added: "Achieving the Sheriff's objective and meeting my standards was a daunting task. Michael Shakman and his attorneys took tough, skeptical views of the Sheriff's efforts." As the stakes continued to climb, the Judge noted that "Brette stayed strong and played an essential role in leading the Sheriff's legal effort and persuading the court to lift the Decree."

Robert Shannon, Managing Partner of Hinshaw & Culbertson, notes that Sheriff Dart himself nominated Bensinger for this award and has relied on Bensinger's legal talents ever since working with her on the Shakman case. "Brette's direct communication style, deep expertise in employment law and dedicated advocacy led us to Shakman compliance more than two years before any other governmental office," Dart said. "We rely on her as a 'go-to' lawyer on internal employment advice and when we face difficult opponents in litigation."

Bensinger's peers say that her success in this effort was hardly surprising. Bensinger has long been an impressive attorney, both in and outside the courtroom, they say.

"Brette is a skillful litigator with exceptional instincts," said Jennifer Ballard Croft, Chief of Staff of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. Prior to becoming the Chief of Staff for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, Croft worked with Bensinger in representing private and public businesses and agencies on compliance and sensitive personnel matters. "In addition to Brette's broad litigation experience, she is also a trusted advisor

to her clients. Some of Brette's biggest achievements are in helping clients prevent complex workforce management issues from developing into actual lawsuits. When Brette is involved, I know the client will have the most competent and responsive lawyer. I also know that there is no advocate more devoted than Brette." Croft added, "in every instance, Brette's core values and high ethical standards direct her path and lead her actions."

Bensinger's unique blend of legal skill and direct counsel is echoed by Sheila O'Grady, former Executive Director of the Illinois Restaurant Association, who hired Brette to provide legal direction to the start-up venture, Chicago Gourmet. "Now in its 10th year, Chicago Gourmet has developed into one of the most successful food and wine events in the country, and Brette played a key role in its success."

Outside the courtroom, Bensinger is equally dedicated to her community and profession. She is a leader with the Illinois Constitutional Rights Foundation's Edward J. Lewis II Lawyers in a Classroom program. In that role, she organizes about 20 lawyers from Hinshaw to teach seventh-grade students at a west-side Chicago Public School about the Constitution and the legal system.

Bensinger also serves on the Public Policy Committee of the Board of Directors of Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago ("Lurie Children's"), where she assists in identifying public policy and programming priorities for the hospital. Her commitment to Lurie Children's extends to her role as the Chair of the Advocacy Committee for the hospital's Founders' Board. In that volunteer role, Bensinger leads an annual delegation of women to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of Illinois Congressional delegation and advocate for critical children's healthcare initiatives at the federal level. Honey Skinner, retired partner with Sidley & Austin LLP, and member of the Lurie Children's Board of Directors, noted that Bensinger "has expanded participation and engagement from board members and increased access and dialogue with leading legislators on healthcare in Washington."

BRETTE BENSINGER



Age
38

Firm

Hinshaw & Culbertson
222 N. LaSalle Drive, Suite 300
Chicago

Law School

Chicago-Kent College of Law

Practice Area

Labor and employment,
compliance

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