



# Lara A. H. Shortz

## Firm Recruiting Partner/Labor & Employment Practice Group Leader

### Hospitality

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### Profile

Lara Shortz leads the Labor & Employment Practice Group at M&R and is the firm's Employment Advice, Counsel & Executive Disputes Chair. Operating out of the Los Angeles office, Lara is also the Firm Recruiting Partner and, in that capacity, she is tasked with implementing M&R's strategic plan to expand upon its roster of talented attorneys nationwide.

Named in 2023 as one of the most influential women attorneys in L.A. by the *Los Angeles Business Journal* (recognition she has earned multiple times), Lara handles the full spectrum of employment-related issues on behalf of management. That being said, she is particularly known for her work advising domestic and international companies on major growth and hiring initiatives as well as workforce reductions. In fact, Lara handled the coordinated, temporary and permanent layoffs of thousands of hotel and restaurant employees (among others) during the height of the COVID-19

pandemic, which involved state and federal WARN Act issues.

In addition, Lara is sought after to negotiate complex employment agreements, navigate restrictive covenant issues, and litigate executive disputes. Over the years, countless professionals in C-Suite positions have leaned upon her when transitioning to new companies.

In terms of her litigation prowess, Lara has compiled an extraordinary record of wins representing high-profile businesses facing state and federal gender-based claims, including claims of pay equity and #MeToo-related causes of action. Further, she has successfully defended scores of clients in the hospitality space, among other industries, in wage and hour class and collective actions (PAGA)—this on top of her many additional successes litigating single plaintiff discrimination, harassment and retaliation matters at both the state and federal levels.

Beyond the courtroom, a significant portion of Lara's practice involves advice and counsel, as reflected in her chair designation. Not only does she provide guidance on a variety of legal and human resources issues (lawful hiring practices, leaves of absence, employee classification and wage and hour compliance), investigations (sexual harassment, discrimination and employee and executive misconduct), administrative and internal compliance audits, and supervisor and management trainings (including sexual harassment prevention), Lara also helps emerging companies establish their employment infrastructure in the form of policies, best practices and operational mechanisms to support growth and facilitate investment.

## **Associated Industries**

Hospitality

## **Associated Practices**

Labor & Employment

## **Representative Matters**

Counseling & Negotiation: Audited approximately 400 positions at major gaming company to determine exempt and non-exempt employment status of workforce., Counseling & Negotiation: Advised hotel client regarding best practices relative to complex and sensitive employee leave (pregnancy and disability) issues., Counseling & Negotiation: Advised mortgage bank client regarding best practices relative to misclassification (exempt/non-exempt employee) issues., Counseling & Negotiation: Conducted major audits on behalf of emerging companies concerning the classification of hundreds of employees, and implemented changes informed by the results of the audits to limit potential liability., Litigation: Successfully defended multiple television and production companies against wage and hour misclassification and related PAGA claims., Litigation: Defended class action lawsuit on behalf of hotel sued for multiple wage and hour violations as well as violation of the Los Angeles Hotel Minimum Wage Ordinance, an issue of first impression., Litigation: Acted as second chair in bench trial representing private high net worth investor in a technology company that created English language learning software distributed to the Chinese market. Recovered multi-million dollar verdict on behalf of client against principal who hid assets overseas and failed to deliver returns on investment., Litigation:

Negotiated a highly favorable settlement for hotel client facing a pregnancy discrimination action prosecuted by a former employee., Litigation: Defended age discrimination and hostile workplace environment claims against a start-up company having a predominantly young workforce. Resolved the case for nuisance value following a multi-million dollar demand., Litigation: Defended a wage and hour claim based on the misclassification of an exempt employee, and prosecuted a cross-complaint against that employee for breach of fiduciary duty and duty of loyalty and trade secret violations, among other things. Commanded the employee's six-figure payment to the employer, with no liability on the underlying wage and hour action., WARN Act: Successfully represented media and marketing business conducting mass layoffs, requiring exhaustive federal and state (California and New York) WARN Act analysis and transition to bankruptcy counsel that led to the ultimate restructuring of the company., WARN Act: Advised large food production company conducting mass layoffs under the WARN Act in coordination with the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation., and Whistleblower Litigation: Successfully defended environmental consultant in an employment retaliation and discrimination lawsuit while concurrently defending a Qui Tam whistleblower case that involved a related criminal investigation.

### **Bar & Court Admissions**

- State Bar of California
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

### **Industry Associations Industries**

- Hotel Association of Los Angeles (Board of Directors)

### **Professional Affiliations**

- National Association of Legal Search Consultants

### **Community Involvement**

- The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, NJ—Lawrenceville Club of Southern California (Co-President)
- Le Lycée Français de Los Angeles (Parent Committee)

### **Education**

- Southwestern University School of Law, J.D.
- University of Southern California, M.A.
- University of Southern California, B.A.

### **Award & Special Recognition**

- Most Influential Women Attorney, *Los Angeles Business Journal* (2019-2023)

- Rising Star, *Super Lawyers Magazine* (2014-2015)

## Newsroom

Media Mentions - 11/17/2023 12:45pm

Hotel Industry Players Challenge NLRB Joint Employer Rule

Media Mentions - 07/14/2023 10:22am

Post-Pandemic Hospitality Trends To Watch At Midyear 2023

Headlines - 04/18/2023 3:09pm

Lara Shortz Named Woman of Influence Again by the Los Angeles Business Journal

Media Mentions - 03/29/2023 11:11am

Lara Shortz Quoted in bizwomen (The Business Journals)

Media Mentions - 07/12/2022 12:00am

Lara Shortz Featured in Human Resource Executive

Headlines - 04/18/2022 10:00am

Lara Shortz Named Once Again Named a Woman of Influence

Publications - 02/15/2021 12:00am

Can Your Boss Force You to Get a COVID Vaccine Shot?

Media Mentions - 01/03/2021 12:00am

Hospitality Trends And Cases To Watch In 2021

Media Mentions - 05/18/2020 10:00am

Home offices are expensive: Study says most people didn't have one before coronavirus

Media Mentions - 01/01/2020 10:00am

Hospitality Cases And Trends To Watch In 2020

Headlines - 01/17/2019 10:00am

Lara Shortz Named to the Board of Directors of the Hotel Association of Los Angeles

Media Mentions - 12/06/2018 10:00am

Calif. Bill Floated To Undo Dynamex Worker Classification Test

Media Mentions - 09/20/2018 10:00am

Landmark tip-credit lawsuit revived in Ninth Circuit

Media Mentions - 01/01/2018 10:00am

Hospitality Cases To Watch In 2018

Publications - 12/12/2017 12:00am

California employment laws to look for in 2018