

How We Help School Districts

Pacifica Law Group is dedicated to helping public school districts achieve their goals, successfully deal with challenges, and benefit from opportunities. Below is a summary of the key areas in which we support school district clients.

COMPLIANCE AND POLICY

Our attorneys assist public school districts in adopting and revising policies and procedures for compliance with applicable laws and regulations and in implementing best practices. We also advise school boards on a wide variety of legal matters in executive session and conduct training for school board members, school district administrators, and school district staff to help ensure compliance with law and policy. We provide guidance on the Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act, as well as general public agency compliance matters. We are also experienced advocates before state and local legislative bodies and on state and local education ballot measures.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Our team advises school districts on personnel issues, including disability and accommodation compliance, nondiscrimination, disciplinary actions, evaluations, and dismissals. We also help school districts navigate complex constitutional issues, such as employee speech and religious expression. Our attorneys have experience dealing with all aspects of labor relations, including collective bargaining with unions, the drafting and interpretation of collective bargaining agreements, the grievance and arbitration process, and matters involving the Public Employment Relations Commission, including claims of unfair labor practices.

SCHOOL DISTRICT BONDS AND LEVIES

Our public finance team has wide-ranging experience with traditional and innovative financing tools available to school districts under federal and state law. We have served as bond counsel and disclosure counsel in connection with all types of publicly-sold and privately-placed debt issuances for school districts, including: voted unlimited tax general obligation bonds; non-voted limited general obligation bonds; qualified school construction bonds; Build America Bonds; bond anticipation notes; LOCAL financings; and financing leases.

We represent large and small school districts across the state on bond and levy issues. We regularly draft ballot language and authorizing legislation for bond, enrichment and capital levies, and assist school districts with drafting and reviewing related election materials. We regularly advise school districts on compliance with state and local laws and regulations governing levy elections communications and in administrative proceedings before the Public Disclosure Commission.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

We represent school districts in all areas of special education advice and dispute resolution. We regularly advise on special education policies, procedures, eligibility and placements, and accommodations. We are

experienced in helping schools deal with issues associated with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Our attorneys have successfully developed and implemented strategies for defense of educational programming decisions before the Washington State Office of Administrative Hearings and the review of those decisions in U.S. District Courts and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

STUDENT MATTERS

We counsel school districts on student-related issues, such as student discipline, claims of discrimination or harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB), school safety, Title IX, and constitutional issues, including search and seizure and freedom of expression. We also represent school districts in contested hearings and in appeals of student related matters before governing boards. Our attorneys also advise districts regarding the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including its application to data-sharing contracts and policies.

ADMINISTRATIVE DISPUTES, LITIGATION, AND APPEALS

Our team has significant experience handling matters for school districts before administrative bodies and in state and federal court. This includes multiple federal court appeals of special education decisions, the successful defense of a school district against a federal lawsuit asserting constitutional and statutory claims over the district's communications with a parent, and the prosecution and defense of multiple school district boundary petitions before the Regional Committee on

School District Organization, State Board of Education, Office of Administrative Hearings, and state courts.

We have also successfully defended school districts against a variety of freedom of expression cases brought by both students and employees.

EDUCATION FACILITIES: REAL ESTATE, LAND USE, EMINENT DOMAIN, AND CONSTRUCTION

We provide comprehensive legal counsel to public school districts in the planning and development of new school facilities. Our attorneys provide counsel on a range of issues related to school facilities, including growth management and zoning matters, land use and facilities planning, environmental review, feasibility and site selection, facilities permitting, construction procurement, and all aspects of the public contracting and public works process. Our team also has vast experience working with school districts to address the impacts of new residential development on school facilities.

We also regularly assist school districts with complex and simple real estate transactions. This experience includes drafting and negotiating purchase and sale agreements, leases, licenses, covenant agreements, and private and public easements. Our lawyers are well-versed in the specific legal requirements and policy concerns encountered by school districts in real property matters.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS ATTORNEYS

Sam Chalfant

sam.chalfant@pacificalawgroup.com

Carlos Chavez

carlos.chavez@pacificalawgroup.com

Deanna Gregory

deanna.gregory@pacificalawgroup.com

Sarah Johnson

sarah.johnson@pacificalawgroup.com

Curtis Leonard

curtis.leonard@pacificalawgroup.com

Sarah Mack

sarah.mack@pacificalawgroup.com

Please contact any of the members of our School Districts team for assistance.

Faith Pettis

faith.pettis@pacificalawgroup.com

Rachel Simon

rachel.simon@pacificalawgroup.co

Denise Stiffarm

denise.stiffarm@pacificalawgroup.com

Toby Tobler

tobias.tobler@pacificalawgroup.com

Zak Tomlinson

zak.tomlinson@pacificalawgroup.com

Susan Winkelman

susan.winkelman@pacificalawgroup.com