Hema Steele

Senior Counsel

hsteele@connmaciel.com 380.260.5131

Columbus, Ohio *Also Speaks: Konkani (Fluent), Italian (Fluent), French (Basic)*



Hema Steele is a Senior Counsel in Conn Maciel Carey LLP's Columbus, OH office supporting the OSHA, MSHA, and Labor and Employment Practices.

Hema advises and defends employers in workplace safety, mining safety, and labor and employment matters. She focuses on helping clients navigate regulatory compliance, defend against enforcement actions, and address complex employment and labor issues.

Key Services

OSHA & Workplace Safety

Hema helps employers navigate complex workplace safety regulations, providing:

- Regulatory counsel on federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) and state OSH programs
- Defense against OSHA citations and enforcement actions
- Development and review of safety programs and policies

MSHA (Mine Safety & Health Administration)

Hema works closely with mining operators to manage regulatory risk and maintain compliance, including:

- Representation in MSHA inspections, investigations, and enforcement actions
- Advising on compliance with MSHA regulations
- Designing proactive mine safety programs and policies

Labor & Employment

As part of her broader employment law practice, Hema provides strategic guidance on:

- Whistleblower complaints investigated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- Employer-employee relations, including day-to-day HR and compliance support
- Wage and hour claims, with a focus on independent contractor classification and gig economy issues

- Pension plan disputes

Before joining Conn Maciel Carey, Hema spent more than 11 years as a Solicitor with the United States Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor (DOL) first as a Trial Attorney, then as a Senior Trial Attorney. As a Solicitor, Hema litigated numerous workplace safety and health cases on behalf of OSHA, in addition to litigating a wide range of labor and employment matters, including but not limited to wage hour claims brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), and the various whistleblower statutes investigated and enforced by OSHA.

Before her tenure at the DOL, Hema served as an associate at a large, regional law firm where she represented employers with respect to workplace harassment and discrimination, workers' compensation, and wage and hour matters. Most recently, Hema was proud to serve as the Chief of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, the nation's 7th largest housing authority. In that role, she oversaw the organization's handling of Fair Housing Act issues (e.g., reasonable accommodations for residents with disabilities), its Davis-Bacon (prevailing wage) compliance, and its procurement programs for minority/women-owned businesses.

Outside the Office

Hema is an avid world traveler and loves all things food: eating, cooking, baking, vegetable gardening, and reading cookbooks. She resides with her husband and son in Cleveland, Ohio, where she is perpetually hunting for the next great restaurant, bakery, or specialty grocer.

Recognition & Awards

- Secretary of Labor's Exceptional Achievement Award (2014, 2016, 2018, and 2019)
- Recipient of the Secretary of Labor's Worker Protection Award (2018)
- Selectee of Office of the Solicitor's Attorney Leadership Development Program (2017 – 2018)

Speaking Engagements

- **Hema frequently presents on a variety of topics for the firm's OSHA Webinar Series, MSHA Webinar Series, and Labor & Employment Webinar Series.**

Affiliations

- Former President of the Board of Directors, Ohio Contemporary Ballet (formerly known as Verb Ballets)
- Class of 2023 Cleveland Bridge Builders Leadership Program

Education

- J.D., Case Western Reserve University School of Law, 2006
- Association B.A., Wesleyan University, 2003
- Eastern College Consortium Program (ECCO) in Bologna, Italy, Spring 2001

Admissions

- Ohio
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio

Experience

- Defended employers before the Department of Labor regarding whistleblower complaints investigated and enforced by OSHA by securing dismissals and/or advantageous settlement terms
- Advised multi-national employers on unusual OSHA jurisdictional issues related to offshore worksites
- Negotiated highly favorable settlements of OSHA citations resulting in significant reductions in penalties, classifications, and/or overall number of violations while guiding employers on how to continue strengthening their safety programs
- Drafted highly technical brief challenging Department of Labor's authority to promulgate new MSHA regulations
- Represented employers' interests by submitting to Department of Labor public comments advocating for improvements to proposed rules