

Joshua Hughes

Associate

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Des Moines – 515.697.3607



Josh is a tenacious labor and employment attorney who brings courtroom credibility and practical counsel to employers navigating complex workplace challenges.

Josh is an associate in Dorsey's Labor and Employment Group, where he represents and advises employers across a wide range of employment matters. His practice spans litigation, advisory work, and transactional support, allowing him to provide clients with realistic, strategy-driven counsel at every stage, whether they are trying to prevent disputes, structure compliant agreements, or resolve claims that have already arisen.

Josh counsels employers across industries on a broad range of workplace issues, including leave of absence management, drug testing policies, religious and disability accommodations, reductions in force, and internal investigations. Working closely with Dorsey's Healthcare Transactions and Regulations practice group, Josh also advises healthcare clients on employment matters unique to the sector, including negotiating and advising on physician and other provider employment agreements. Admitted in Iowa and Minnesota, Josh regularly advises clients on compliance with Title VII, the ADA, the FMLA, and state employment laws nationwide, and he writes regularly on emerging employment law developments for both national and Iowa-specific audiences.

On the litigation side, Josh represents employers in federal and state courts and before administrative agencies in matters involving discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful termination, and wage and hour claims. He has handled cases before courts and administrative agencies across a wide range of jurisdictions, including Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Kentucky, Arizona, California, South Dakota, Florida, and Wisconsin. He has particular experience representing Class I railroads in matters arising under the Federal Railroad Safety Act, including whistleblower retaliation claims before the Department of Labor and in federal court. His background as a law clerk at the Iowa Court of Appeals gives him an acute understanding of how appellate courts evaluate employment issues — an advantage he brings to every case he litigates.

Education

- Drake University Law School (Juris Doctor, 2021)
 - *with Highest Honors, Order of the Coif*
- Drake University (B.A., 2019)

Bar Admissions

- Iowa
- Minnesota

Josh is committed to the communities he serves. He is a member of the Iowa State Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, where he serves on the executive and diversity committees, and he volunteers his time to support the ISBA's middle and high school mock trial program. Josh has also been recognized for his pro bono work on behalf of individuals navigating the legal process of affirming their gender identity, including name changes and other critical legal documentation.

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Iowa
- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa

Professional Affiliations

- District 5C Representative and Diversity Committee Co-Chair, Iowa State Bar Association Young Lawyers Division

Clerkships

- Iowa Court of Appeals, Hon. David May, 2021–2022

Accolades

- *Chambers USA*, Labor & Employment, Iowa, 2026
- *Great Plains Super Lawyers®*, "Rising Star," 2025-2026
- Contributed more than 50 Diversity & Inclusion hours, 2024
- Honorary Order of the Barristers, Drake University Law School, 2022

Additional Information

Law Review

Rex Non Potest Peccare: The Unsettled State of Sovereign Immunity and Constitutional Torts, 69 [Drake law Review](#) 949 (2022).

Select Speaking Engagements

- Panelist, Iowa's New Civil Rights Act and the Impact on Transgender Protections: Perspectives from Plaintiff, Defense, and In-House Counsel, Iowa State Bar Association Annual Meeting, June 24, 2025
- Presenter, HR in Health Care: Navigating New Challenges and Staying in Control, Iowa Health Care Association Regional Meetings, May 20–22, 2025
- Presenter, HR in Motion: What Employers Need to Know to Stay Ahead & Navigate New Norms, Iowa Coalition of Governments Staff Retreat, May 1, 2025
- Speaker, Maintaining Confidentiality and Protecting Privilege in Internal Investigations, Heartland of Iowa SHRM Chapter, March 12, 2025
- Presenter, Updates for Iowa Employers, Greater Des Moines Partnership Inclusion Council, March 6, 2025
- Speaker, Committing to DEI and Staying Compliant, Schabel Solutions Roundtable, February 11, 2025
- Panelist, Human Resources for Newly Elected County Officials, Iowa State

Association of Counties New Officer School, January 15, 2025

- Speaker, Workplace Investigations 101, Great River Human Resources Association, November 13, 2024
 - Speaker, Workplace Investigations 101, Iowa Society for Human Resource Management (ISHRM) State Conference, September 26, 2024
 - Speaker, DEI and Legal Compliance: Being Intentional and Compliant, Iowa Society for Human Resource Management (ISHRM) State Conference, September 26, 2024
 - Panelist, Iowa State Association of Counties HR Seminar, March 13, 2024
 - Speaker, Iowa Drug Testing and Ban the Box, Iowa SHRM Chapter, November 8, 2023
 - Speaker, Sexual Harassment Recognition and Prevention Training, August 31, 2023
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Insights

December 11, 2025

Reputation is Everything: Iowa Supreme Court Clarifies Use of Closed Session Job Interviews

November 22, 2024

A Federal District Court Struck Down the Department of Labor's Minimum Salary Increase for Exempt Employees: Now What?

April 11, 2024

What Employers Need to Know about Iowa's Religious Freedom Restoration Act

April 2, 2024

Assessing the Legality of DEI Programs

January 17, 2024

Workplace Drug Testing: New Iowa Court of Appeals Ruling Signals Best Practices for Employers

August 21, 2023

New Child Labor Law Signals Changes for Employers, Attorneys

June 30, 2023

Supreme Court Raises Standard for Denial of Religious Accommodations

June 8, 2023

What Employers Need to Know About Iowa's New Child Labor Law

January 25, 2023

New York Governor Hochul Signs New York Pay Transparency Bill Into Law

January 10, 2023

FTC Takes First Step to Make Good on Promise to Curtail Non-Compete Agreements