

**Melissa J. Pegram**

Shareholder

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Practice Areas

- Commercial Transactions
- Corporate and Business Organizations
- Employment
- Estate Planning, Wills and Probate
- Hospitality and Lodging
- Landlord/Tenant
- Real Estate

Practice Emphasis

Melissa J. Pegram was born in Waxahachie, Texas and has been with Cowles & Thompson since 1981.. Melissa is a Senior Shareholder with Cowles & Thompson, is Chair of the Firm's Business and Commercial Law Section, and is a senior member of the Firm's Employment Law Section.

Ms. Pegram focuses on the representation of businesses in the area of commercial law and in dealing with all types of employment law issues commonly encountered by businesses. As a part of her representation of businesses, Melissa supervises and directs the handling of complex employment and commercial litigation matters, successfully negotiates and documents complex "business divorces", structures and documents business acquisitions and sales, drafts all documents relating to the formation of business entities and reviews and negotiates all types of business transactions, such as lease agreements and commercial loan transactions, and provides general counsel advice and services necessary for the day-to-day operation of businesses.

In the employment context, Ms. Pegram prepares employer responses to employment-related complaints filed with the Department of Labor, the EEOC, and other administrative agencies, conducts investigations into allegations of executive and employee misconduct, prepares employment policies and handbooks, all types of employment-related contracts, confidentiality agreements, covenants not to compete/restrictive covenants, and separation/severance agreements. Melissa gives advice daily to corporate counsel and corporate human resources/personnel directors regarding litigation avoidance measures and the handling of employment-related situations and decisions.

In her many years of experience, Ms. Pegram has successfully handled numerous complicated estate probate and trust matters, working through difficult, hard-fought issues to reach favorable results for her clients.

Publications and Speaking Engagements

Ms. Pegram is a frequent speaker at educational seminars on a wide range of commercial and employment law related topics. She is an adjunct professor in the Paralegal Studies Program of the Dallas County Community College District. Melissa is the author of numerous articles on various commercial and employment topics, several of which are posted on the Cowles & Thompson website.

Memberships

- Member, State Bar of Texas
 - Employment Law Section
- Dallas Bar Association
 - Employment Law Section

Education and Court Admissions

- Admitted to the State Bar of Texas, May 1981
- J.D., Baylor University School of Law, February 1981
- B.A., University of Texas at Arlington, 1972
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Texas

Recent Accomplishments

- In April 2009, Richard Barrett-Cuetara, Eric Yepez and Melissa J. Pegram successfully resolved a \$2 Million investment fraud case on behalf of their clients. The Firm's clients were investors, officers, shareholders and members of the board of directors of the defrauded corporation. The lawsuit alleged the President of the defrauded corporation had misappropriated corporate funds, breached his fiduciary duties, participated in "self-dealing", and conspired with a national banking institution to usurp all ownership rights in the defrauded corporation in a "quid pro quo" arrangement of favorable loans to the President of the defrauded corporation in exchange for alleged bribery payments to the national banking institution. In a favorable settlement, the Firm's clients received the return of more than \$1.5 Million dollars, representing approximately 75% of their initial investment of \$2 Million dollars. Mr. Barrett-Cuetara and Mr. Yepez prosecuted the litigation, while Ms. Pegram analyzed various documents and transactions that were a part of this arrangement and also prepared the settlement documents, including the Settlement Agreement, the Promissory Note, a Pledge Agreement, utilizing stock in several corporations as security for payment of settlement obligations, corporate resolutions and consents, and Deeds of Trust to secure performance of obligations under the terms of the settlement documents.