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NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OVERVIEW





# INTRODUCTION

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

I am pleased to share an overview of the New York City Law Department, which highlights the office's tremendous breadth of subject matter expertise. Every day, our attorneys and support professionals handle an extraordinary volume of complex matters concerning every aspect of the law, for one of the largest and busiest cities in the world.

We ensure that the City runs smoothly by counseling the Mayor, City Council, other elected officials, and City agencies on a myriad of issues.

Annually, we handle approximately 70,000 matters. From affirmative and defensive litigation to legal counseling, reviewing contracts, and drafting legislation – this is a team effort. Every Division and Unit within the Law Department works tirelessly toward one goal: providing our City with the best legal expertise.

Public service is a calling, and I am grateful to the more than 1,500 public servants who comprise the New York City Law Department and are steadfast in their commitment and dedication to this City.

Muriel Goode-Trufant



Corporation Counsel of the City of New York







# ABOUT THE LAW DEPARTMENT

The New York City Law Department is responsible for all of New York City's legal affairs. The Corporation Counsel heads the Law Department and acts as legal counsel for the Mayor, elected officials, the City and its agencies. Attorneys represent New York City on affirmative and defensive civil litigation; legislative and legal issues; the prosecution of juvenile delinquency matters; and Administrative Code enforcement proceedings brought in Criminal Court.

With offices in all five boroughs and Kingston, New York, the Law Department handles an active caseload of over 70,000 lawsuits and legal matters each year. In addition to litigation, attorneys draft and review local and state legislation; approve leases, contracts and financial instruments for the sale of municipal bonds; negotiate and structure business transactions; advise on ethics and compliance matters; assess risk management strategies to help make the City safer; and provide legal counsel to City officials on a wide range of issues, such as immigration, education, judicial selection reform, and environmental policy



# LEGAL DIVISIONS



Administrative Law & Regulatory Litigation

Affirmative Litigation

Appeals

Commercial & Real Estate Litigation

Contracts & Real Estate

Economic Development

Environmental Law

Ethics & Compliance

Family Court

General Litigation

Labor & Employment Law

Legal Counsel

Municipal Finance

Risk Management

Special Federal Litigation

Tax & Bankruptcy Litigation

Tort

Workers' Compensation



## ADMINISTRATIVE LAW & REGULATORY LITIGATION

Attorneys in the Administrative Law Regulatory Litigation Division defend the City in lawsuits that challenge the validity of its regulatory laws and the policies and decisions of the administrative agencies charged with carrying them out. Division attorneys also bring civil actions and criminal proceedings against individuals and corporations that violate the City's regulatory requirement. In addition, the Division represents the City's five pension funds in litigation challenging individual benefit determinations.

## AFFIRMATIVE LITIGATION

The Affirmative Litigation Division represents the City as a plaintiff on a wide range of issues, including civil racketeering, fraud, nuisance, restitution, antitrust, breach of contract, insurance, intellectual property, and state and federal funding matters. The Division protects the City's interests and advances its agenda by commencing claims and recovering monies owed to the City.

## APPEALS

The Appeals Division handles appeals originating from virtually all of the Law Department's litigating divisions and crafts amicus curiae briefs in cases implicating the City's interests. The division's attorneys appear before federal and state appellate courts and file hundreds of appellate briefs each year in an array of cases—from routine litigation arising out of the governance of a municipality with 8.5 million residents to complex appeals involving cutting-edge legal questions and critical public policy issues. The unparalleled breadth and depth of division's docket affords its attorneys a unique perspective on how the City works and an unrivaled opportunity to engage in high-caliber appellate practice and contribute to legal developments impacting the City's government and its residents.

## COMMERCIAL & REAL ESTATE LITIGATION

The Division's primary role is to represent the City and its related entities in disputes and litigation arising from their contract and real-estate relationships and transactions. The Division's cases include novel and complex contractual, statutory, and constitutional issues, and some cases seek tens of millions of dollars in damages or challenge critical government decisions. Division attorneys often engage in extensive discovery and sometimes retain expert consultants to address complex questions of accounting, construction, or other issues requiring specialized knowledge.



# LEGAL DIVISIONS



## CONTRACTS & REAL ESTATE

The Contracts and Real Estate Division provides counseling services to City agencies and officials on transactional matters. Division attorneys evaluate and approve City agreements, leases, business documents, and contracts totaling approximately \$10 billion annually. They also structure, negotiate, and draft complex agreements entered into by City agencies. Business and land use restrictions and considerations that do not apply to the private sector can make their work even more complex—for example, the need to award, within certain limits, contracts to the lowest bidder to protect the public interest. Division lawyers are highly trained in regulations and statutes applicable to municipal contracts and real property transactions as well as administration, budget, and public policy concerns and general commercial law.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Division acts as the City's business and transactional counsel for a wide range of challenging and complex projects that are intended to enhance the City's economic base either by generating direct revenue for the City treasury or by strengthening the City's tax base and general economic health. Division attorneys work on all aspects of the transaction, helping to structure the deal from its inception, negotiating and drafting the documentation, following through to closing and administering the agreements after closing. In addition, the Division advises on corporate issues in connection with the formation of new not-for-profit entities and on corporation governance issues with existing entities such as Trust for Governors island. The Division also advises on all aspects of telecommunication matters.

## ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

The Environmental Law Division represents the City and its agencies in an extensive range of environmental matters, including land use and environmental review of City projects and private development; wastewater and stormwater treatment and compliance; Clean Air Act compliance and enforcement; solid and hazardous waste management; parks and natural resources preservation (including public trust issues and wetlands protection and remediation); sustainability and resilience issues; energy development; and harbor navigation and dredging. The Division also works on numerous matters concerning the City's water supply system, relating to both system operations and protecting water quality. Division attorneys litigate in State and federal courts; represent the City in administrative and legislative hearings; and counsel agencies on their environmental programs, policies, and compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

# ETHICS & COMPLIANCE

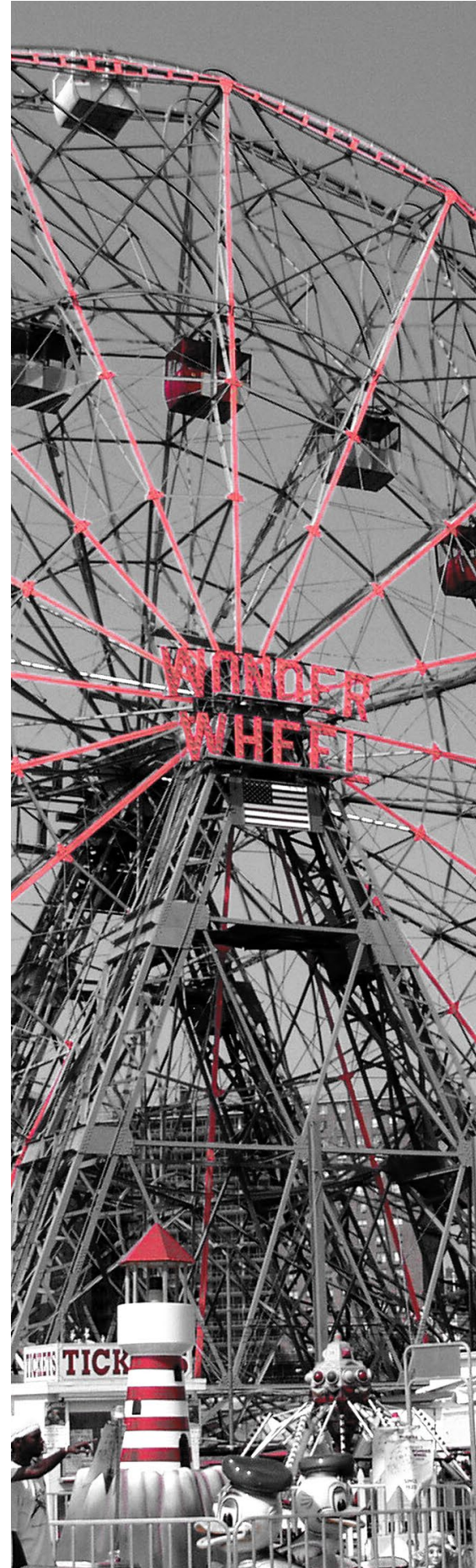
Ethics & Compliance counsels and trains office staff, New York City officials, and employees of all City agencies on legal ethics, privilege, representation and sanctions matters. It also counsels on a wide array of federal, state and local compliance matters. Moreover, it serves as the Conflict of Interest Board liaison, ensuring Law Department employees' compliance with Chapter 68 restrictions and filing requirements. Finally, it represents City attorneys in disciplinary proceedings before the Attorney Grievance Committees and represents the five District Attorneys' Offices and the Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office before the newly formed New York State Commission on Prosecutorial Conduct.

# FAMILY COURT

The Family Court Division is divided into two subunits – Interstate Child Support and Juvenile Delinquency Prosecution. In prosecuting juvenile delinquency, the Family Court seeks to ensure that those youth who commit delinquent acts are held accountable for their misconduct and receive appropriate services. The Law Department seeks to balance the need for protection of the community with the needs and the best interests of the youth. The Division's work also includes providing information to victims of youth crime on available community-based services, including counseling, crisis intervention, and safety planning. Interstate Child Support appears on behalf of out-of-state custodial parent petitioners seeking to establish paternity and obtain child support from City residents. The Unit also assists City-based custodial parents who wish to file for child support from parents outside the State or country. The Division has offices in all five boroughs.

# GENERAL LITIGATION

The General Litigation Division defends the City and its agencies in lawsuits challenging policies and practices concerning important programs in such varied fields as education, health care, public assistance benefits, prison conditions, foster care and election law. This caseload offers Division lawyers unparalleled opportunities to develop and hone the full range of litigation skills while litigating vital, and often controversial, public policy issues that affect the lives of all New Yorkers. Division attorneys practice in both federal and State courts, arguing motions, participating in court conferences, taking and defending depositions, and trying cases. Cases handled by Division attorneys not only affect determinations made in the City's everyday governance and the manner in which legal mandates are met, but also can determine whether key City initiatives survive legal challenge. Many of these cases present issues at the forefront of developing legal theory.





# LEGAL DIVISIONS



## LABOR & EMPLOYMENT LAW

The Labor & Employment Law Division represents the City as employer of over a quarter-million workers. The Division handles a variety of matters, including the First Amendment free speech rights of municipal employees; claims of discrimination and retaliation under Title VII, the Americans With Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the State and City Human Rights Laws; allegations of violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act; claims under the Equal Pay Act; and claims brought by both individual City employees and unions based on collective bargaining agreements and the Civil Service Law.

## LEGAL COUNSEL

The Legal Counsel Division provides advice to the Office of the Mayor, other elected officials and City agencies concerning virtually every area of municipal law. The Division provides the legal advice and crafts the legislative changes necessary to shape and implement policy initiatives. The Division is also responsible for drafting State and local legislation proposed by the Mayor and City agencies and for assisting in the drafting of administrative rules. Division attorneys often represent the Law Department on intergovernmental committees and task forces.

## MUNICIPAL FINANCE

The Municipal Finance Division serves as counsel to the City on all bond transactions. New York City is one of the largest issuers of municipal bonds in the country. The proceeds of its debt issuances finance capital projects that impact virtually every aspect of City life. The City issues debt through its general obligation bonds and through authorities and local development corporations. Additionally, State agencies issue debt on behalf of the City. Each year, the Division oversees billions of dollars in financial transactions. The Division also performs corporate governance work for the City's debt issuing authorities and local development corporations.





## RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Management assists agency partners in identifying and mitigating risks to decrease the potential for harm to New York City's residents and visitors while protecting the City financially. The Division works with agency partners to evaluate existing procedures and operations based on risks identified in litigation. It counsels agencies on mitigating their legal risk through recommended program changes or, when applicable, waivers or indemnifications. The Division leverages available data to identify potential future risks with a goal of prevention. They work with other Law Department Divisions to understand the risks associated with their work and collaborate to mitigate those risks, and they analyze the impact of court appointed monitorships on related pending litigation across the Law Department. The Division also helps agencies create and maintain a proactive data management process.

## SPECIAL FEDERAL LITIGATION

The Special Federal Litigation Division defends the City and its officials in civil rights cases brought in federal court in which police, District Attorney, or correction officer misconduct is claimed. The cases on which division attorneys work grow out of contact between citizens and law enforcement officers in three distinct contexts: police operations; criminal prosecutions; and detention of arrestees in the City's detention facilities. The facts on which the claims rest are frequently intricate, calling into play the fundamental problems faced by law enforcement officers in the field and society's perception of how those problems ought to be addressed. The law governing the resolution of these cases is the Constitution of the United States and the vastly complex area of federal law specific to 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, the post-Civil War statute which authorizes suit for violation of constitutional rights. The Division defends against individual damages actions and class actions seeking institutional reform.



# LEGAL DIVISIONS



## TAX & BANKRUPTCY LITIGATION

The Tax & Bankruptcy Litigation Division represents the City on a wide array of subjects and issues. Daily, the Division's attorneys work on matters such as acquiring property by eminent domain or negotiated acquisition, to keep pace with the City's infrastructure and economic development needs, litigating issues regarding tax matters in court and before administrative tribunals, and protecting the City's interests in bankruptcy courts in New York City and across the nation. Division attorneys handle real estate closings, including the review and clearance of title. Division attorneys also provide counsel to City agencies and officials. Real property tax assessments on New York City property are at the heart of the work that Division attorneys do in certiorari cases. This past year, attorneys worked on thousands of cases where challenges to the assessed value of property were made. Defending tax assessments is of critical importance to the City's fiscal health, as the real property tax provides a substantial source of revenue for vital City services.

## TORT

The Tort Division defends the City against thousands of personal injury and property damage cases. The City's extensive provision of facilities, services, and employment is far beyond what any private entity would undertake and exposes the City to wide potential tort liability. Most of the cases are brought in Supreme Court. The Division, the Law Department's largest, has offices in each of the five boroughs. Special units address a wide variety of issues such as risk management, early settlement, catastrophic injuries, and "toxic torts." While some matters involve straightforward negligence claims, such as trip-and-falls, often cases are complex and involve intricate questions of law.

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Workers' Compensation Division represents the City and related entities at all hearings, trials and appeals before the New York State Workers' Compensation Board. The Division also administers all aspects of claims by covered employees who are injured on the job or who incur an occupational disease. Workers' Compensation strives to provide employees the medical and wage replacement benefits to which they are entitled, while objecting to and litigating unwarranted claims. The Division's work involves a wide range of medical issues, including work-related psychiatric diagnoses, respiratory ailments, heart conditions, orthopedic conditions and much more.





# SUPPORT DIVISIONS & UNITS

Administration  
Communications  
E-Discovery  
Information Technology  
Law Library  
Legal Recruitment  
Litigation Support & Info. Management  
Operations  
Professional Development



# SUPPORT DIVISIONS & UNITS



## ADMINISTRATION

The Administration Division provides a level of professional support comparable to that of any large company. The Division's components—Personnel, Payroll and Timekeeping, Facilities and Maintenance, Supplies, Fiscal Management, Internal Control, Cashier's Office, Encumbrance Control Unit, Procurement Services Unit, and the Budget Section—are responsible for all expenditures of funds, collection of revenue and fees, procurement rules compliance, and personnel processing. They provide general administrative oversight and development of internal policies, rules, and regulations. Each year, Administration handles over 35,000 paychecks, personnel actions, payments for expert witnesses, requests for court reporters and depositions, deposits of money recovered in lawsuits on behalf of the City, hundreds of individual procurements, and the enrollment of employees in the health benefits/managerial benefits program. Administration is also responsible for ensuring the physical maintenance of 12 Citywide offices in addition to the Kingston, New York office. The Division's objectives are to save time and money for the Law Department and the City while ensuring first-rate service. Administration's efforts continue to focus on expansion and renovation of the agency's facilities, speedy responses to staff changes, and automation of systems and processes. The Division also provides oversight and advice to other agency enterprises such as litigation support, information technology initiatives, equipment upgrades, and management evaluations, and continuously evaluates how it can utilize technology to increase the agency's efficiency.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Office is the Law Department's link to the media and the public, updating them about important legal matters affecting New York City. In addition, the office provides employees with key news on agencywide happenings and offers insight on strategic projects.





## E-DISCOVERY

The E-Discovery Division consists of attorneys, project managers and e-discovery analysts who work with case teams and agency counsel to meet the Law Department's e-discovery needs. Its members provide legal and technical guidance and services to assist in all aspects of e-discovery – helping to develop strategy, implement legal holds, collect and process electronic data, set up document reviews, apply advanced analytical tools and run document productions. They also help during negotiations with opposing counsel, at court conferences, drafting papers, and wherever their expertise in e-discovery and the governing law and rules may be helpful.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technology (IT) Division is responsible for all aspects of computing and technology use, including network infrastructure, network security, connectivity, data management, information security, application support, database administration, software administration, technical support and much more. The Division's mission is to provide quality IT services and solutions—effectively aligning the agency's business and technology objectives to provide cost-effective, innovative, and quality solutions that facilitate and improve the Law Department's business conduct. The Division is comprised of four sub-units: Application Services, Network Services, Technical Support and Information Security.

## LAW LIBRARY

The Law Library is responsible for all Law Department research support, and its services are also available to other City agencies and the Mayor's Office. A Library staff of six provides expert assistance with online and print resources, and handles all issues relating to reference materials. It houses over 900 print titles, including current subscriptions and historical resources. Lending agreements enable access to other key legal materials. The Library also maintains a hardcopy collection of Department appellate records and briefs, and librarians coordinate access to legal volumes and historical material. It also works on online investigations and helps with a myriad of other library and research duties.



# SUPPORT DIVISIONS & UNITS



## LEGAL RECRUITMENT

The Legal Recruitment Office seeks to hire attorneys and support professionals who are committed to pursuing justice and promoting the public good by providing New York City with the highest quality representation. The office offers numerous internship opportunities for students to learn more about the Law Department's practice. In its work, the office seeks to be guided by its core values: Dedication, Diversity, Excellence, Integrity, Justice, Professional Development, Respect, a Supportive Work Environment and Teamwork.

## LITIGATION SUPPORT & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Litigation Support Division oversees various technologies focused on the practice of law at the Law Department, advises on a diversity of techno-legal topics, and assists high-volume clients in responding to discovery. As such, a wide variety of people work in Litigation Support: lawyers; application and database administrators and other experts; project and contract managers; and paralegals, claim specialists, and public records aides. They are basically broken out into two teams. First, the agency-based discovery team primarily works on-site at the client agencies to streamline the discovery response process by creating repeatable, defensible and efficient workflows. Second, the practice management team oversees the agency's matter management system.





## OPERATIONS

Operations' mission is twofold. First, to provide centralized document production support for Law Department employees, including but not limited to legal processing, case docketing, electronic editing, courier services, composition and duplication of hundreds of documents daily, and the serving and filing of legal papers. Second, the Division seeks out methods to streamline operational protocols and produces specialized reports, including the Mayor's Management Report and governmental audits.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional and Organizational Development is a small unit within the Executive Division, which provides guidance on, and implementation of, programs designed to enhance employee effectiveness, engagement, and commitment to the Law Department culture, values, and clients. Guided by the Law Department's values, the Unit creates cost-effective legal and other trainings that enable the Law Department to provide excellent legal representation to the City. They work collaboratively with all of the Law Department's Divisions, and consult with client agencies to address their professional development needs.





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