19 OCHDL LAWYERS SELECTED AS 2023 BEST LAWYERS®; ANOTHER 4 NAMED BEST LAWYERS: ONES TO WATCH

We are pleased to announce 19 of our lawyers have been included in the 2023 Edition of *The Best Lawyers in America,* and an additional four have been selected as 2023 *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch*.

The following are the O'Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong and Laing lawyers named to the 2023 lists:

Best Lawyers in America

- Douglas P. Dehler – Litigation – Insurance
- James G. DeJong – Corporate Law, Mergers and Acquisitions Law, and Securities / Capital Markets Law
- Seth E. Dizard – Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law and Litigation – Bankruptcy
- Peter J. Faust – Corporate Law and Mergers and Acquisitions Law
- John G. Gehringer – Commercial Litigation, Construction Law, Corporate Law, and Real Estate Law
- Joseph E. Gumina – Employment Law – Management and Litigation – Labor and Employment
- Dennis W. Hollman – Corporate Law and Trusts and Estates
- Grant C. Killoran – Commercial Litigation and Litigation – Health Care
- JB Koenings – Corporate Law
- Dean P. Laing – Commercial Litigation, Personal Injury Litigation – Plaintiffs, and Product Liability Litigation – Defendants
- Gregory W. Lyons – Commercial Litigation and Litigation – Insurance
- Patrick G. McBride – Commercial Litigation
- Joseph D. Newbold – Commercial Litigation
- Chad J. Richter – Business Organizations (including LLCs and Partnerships) and Corporate Law
- John R. Schreiber – Bankruptcy and Creditor Debtor Rights / Insolvency and Reorganization Law and Litigation – Bankruptcy

- Jason R. Scoby – Corporate Law
- Steven J. Slawinski – Construction Law

Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch

- Trevor C. Lippman – Litigation – Trusts and Estates
- Erica N. Reib – Labor and Employment Law – Management and Litigation – Labor and Employment
- Kelly M. Spott – Trusts and Estates
- Christa D. Wittenberg – Commercial Litigation

About Best Lawyers

Best Lawyers has published their list for over three decades, earning the respect of the profession, the media, and the public as the most reliable, unbiased source of legal referrals.

Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch recognizes associates and other lawyers who are earlier in their careers for their outstanding professional excellence in private practice in the United States.

Lawyers on *The Best Lawyers in America* and *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch* lists are divided by geographic region and practice areas. They are reviewed by their peers on the basis of professional expertise, and they undergo an authentication process to make sure they are in current practice and in good standing.

EMPLOYMENT LAWSCENE ALERT: SEVENTH CIRCUIT HOLDS THAT LIGHT DUTY POLICY DID NOT VIOLATE THE PDA

On August 16, 2022, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit issued a decision in *EEOC v. Wal-Mart Stores East, L.P.* (found here), holding that Wal-Mart did not discriminate against pregnant employees by reserving temporary light duty positions only for those employees injured on the job. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) commenced its action against Wal-Mart in 2018 by claiming that Wal-Mart's denial of temporary light duty work to pregnant women violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII) and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA). The federal district court granted Wal-Mart summary judgment dismissing the EEOC's lawsuit. The EEOC then appealed the federal district court's dismissal of its case to the Seventh Circuit. The EEOC argued that

accommodating all employees injured on the job by providing these employees a temporary light duty position and not providing a similar accommodation to pregnant employees constituted a clear case of sex discrimination in violation of Title VII and the PDA. The Seventh Circuit disagreed.

If this fact scenario sounds vaguely familiar, it should, because in 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court addressed similar facts in *Young v. UPS*. In the *Young* case, the U.S. Supreme Court decided whether the PDA allows an employer to have a policy that accommodates some, but not all, workers with non-pregnancy related disabilities but does not accommodate pregnancy-related conditions. In *Young*, UPS offered temporary light duty positions to not only employees injured on the job, but also for other reasons, including those employees who had lost their Department of Transportation certification. The employee in *Young* argued that employers who provide work accommodations to non-pregnant employees must do the same for pregnant employees who are similarly restricted in their ability to work. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, rejected the employee's interpretation of the PDA since it essentially would give pregnant employees an unconditional "most-favored-nations" status because pregnant employees would have to receive the same accommodations that any other employee received *for any reason*. Congress never intended to provide pregnant employees such broad protections.

Instead, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Young* held that a pregnant employee can establish a case of pregnancy discrimination relative to an employer's application of its light duty policy by showing, among other things, that the employer provided light duty positions to others (i.e., non-pregnant employees) similar in their ability or inability to work. If an employee can establish this critical element of her *prima facie* case of discrimination (the "first step"), then the burden shifts to the employer (the "second step") to articulate a "legitimate, nondiscriminatory" business reason for denying the accommodation. An employee can then overcome the employer's legitimate business reason by showing (the "third step") that the employer provided favorable treatment to some non-pregnant employees whose circumstances cannot be distinguished from that of pregnant employees.

In defending its temporary light duty program before the Seventh Circuit, Wal-Mart presented a legitimate business reason by arguing that its program is part of its overall worker's compensation program to bring injured employees back to work as soon as possible while limiting the company's "legal exposure" under Wisconsin's worker's compensation statute and to avoid the cost of hiring people to replace the injured employee. The Seventh Circuit found that offering temporary light duty work to employees injured on the job for these reasons was a "legitimate nondiscriminatory" and neutral justification for denying light duty accommodations to individuals not injured on the job, including pregnant women. According to the Seventh Circuit, Wal-Mart's articulation of a legitimate nondiscriminatory reason supporting the business purpose of its temporary light duty program then shifted the burden to the employee to provide sufficient evidence that Wal-Mart's policy imposed a significant

burden on pregnant employees and that the employer's legitimate business reason was not sufficiently strong to support that burden.

The EEOC argued, however, that Wal-Mart did not meet its burden under the second step (making the third step unnecessary) because the PDA and the *Young* decision required employers to do more than simply establish that their light duty policy was designed to benefit a particular group of non-pregnant employees. Instead, the EEOC argued, the PDA and the *Young* decision required employers to meet a higher burden under the second step by requiring employers to explain *why* pregnant employees are excluded from the program, just not articulate a justification that the program benefited a particular group of non-pregnant employees when, according to the EEOC, Wal-Mart's light duty program could have easily accommodated pregnant employees. The Seventh Circuit rejected the EEOC's argument and called it a stretch to hold that the Congress intended such a heightened burden under the PDA.

The Seventh Circuit held that its decision was consistent with the requirements of the PDA that provides that pregnant women must be "treated the same" as others "similar in their ability or inability to work." The Seventh Circuit also found that its decision was aligned with the U.S. Supreme Court's holding in *Young* because unlike Wal-Mart's policy, UPS's light duty policy seemed to accommodate almost every other group of employees with lifting restrictions, not just those inured on the job (like Wal-Mart's), who were similar to pregnant employees in their ability or inability to work. Wal-Mart, on the other hand, limited application of its light duty policy exclusively to those employees who were injured on the job. The Seventh Circuit stated that the EEOC fell short in establishing disparate treatment discrimination because the EEOC could not offer evidence of comparators who were similar to pregnant women in their ability or inability to work and who benefited from the light duty program, other than employees injured on the job.

In designing a temporary light duty policy for employees injured on the job, employers should be mindful that it is important to develop a strong "legitimate and nondiscriminatory" basis that properly articulates the business reason why the policy is designed to protect a limited class of employees (*e.g.*, employees injured on the job) to the exclusion of others in order to avoid claims of sex discrimination under Title VII and the PDA when pregnant employees are denied accommodations under the policy. It is also important for employers to consistently apply their temporary light duty policies in a non-discriminatory manner by allowing only employees for which the policy was legitimately designed to seek accommodations under the policy— specifically, those employees suffering on-the-job injuries. Also, making exceptions to a temporary light duty policy designed to benefit employees injured on the job or designing a light duty policy that applies to broad categories of other employees can make such a policy susceptible to a claim of sex discrimination under Title VII and the PDA if it does not treat pregnant women the same as other employees not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work.

As always, O'Neil Cannon is here for you to protect your interests. We encourage you to reach out to our labor and employment law team with any questions, concerns, or legal issues related to temporary light duty policies in the workplace.

JOSEPH GUMINA, GRANT KILLORAN, AND ERICA REIB PUBLISHED IN THE WISCONSIN LAWYER

An article by Attorneys Joseph Gumina, Grant Killoran, and Erica Reib entitled "COVID-19 Vaccination Mandates: What Now?" is featured in the March edition of the State Bar of Wisconsin publication *Wisconsin Lawyer*. In their article they detail the challenges mandates create and the current legal status of workplace vaccination requirements.

Read the full article here.

ATTORNEY JOSEPH GUMINA RECENTLY QUOTED IN THE DAILY REPORTER

Attorney **Joseph Gumina** was quoted in The Daily Reporter on February 17, 2022, in an article titled "In absence of federal mandate, many companies still encouraging vaccination for employees." In the article, Gumina, who leads OCHDL's labor and employment practice group, discusses what some employers are doing to encourage their employees to get vaccinated. For some construction companies in Wisconsin, the answer was a cash incentive. "The most common cash incentive that I have seen is $100," said Gumina "Cash incentives are only one of the ways companies have tried to encourage vaccination. Some have brought COVID-19 vaccination clinics to their offices to make it easier for employees to get shots. Others have offered workers an additional day of vacation for getting vaccinated," Gumina said. "I have seen one employer try to encourage its workforce to become vaccinated by informing them that they would not be permitted to return to the office from remote working unless they are fully vaccinated," he added. Whichever course you take, remember OCHDL is here to protect your interests. We encourage you to reach out to our labor and employment law team with any questions, concerns, or legal issues related to workplace safety issues arising from or related to COVID-19.

ATTORNEY JOSEPH GUMINA RECENTLY QUOTED IN THE MILWAUKEE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Attorney Joseph Gumina was recently quoted in the Milwaukee Business Journal published on January 14, 2022, in an article titled "Employers relieved that SCOTUS ruling nixes potential for costly employee COVID-19 tests: Attorneys." The article outlines the Supreme Court's recent ruling against OSHA's vaccination-or-test rule that would have required large employers, starting February 9, to mandate employee vaccinations or require weekly COVID-19 testing of unvaccinated workers.

In the article, Gumina discusses what employers should expect and what he has experienced in his management-side employment practice. "The surge in Omicron variant cases might cause some employers to take temporary measures including shutdowns to keep their workforces healthy," Gumina said. "They've had to adjust and change to address COVID-19 in the workplace on a moment's notice," noting the ongoing adjustments employers have made throughout the pandemic on how they operate. Being mindful that OSHA still retains several enforcement tools in its arsenal to address COVID-19 in the workplace, Gumina stated: "I think employers should remain vigilant in making sure they create a safe work environment for all employees."

For more information on the ruling, read our previous article detailing the decision.

EMPLOYMENT LAWSCENE ALERT: U.S. SUPREME COURT ISSUES STAY OF OSHA'S VACCINATION-OR-TEST RULE

On January 13, 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a split decision (found here) staying the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Vaccination-or-Test Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) that would require employers with 100 or more employees to either impose a mandatory vaccination policy or, alternatively, mandate that unvaccinated workers wear a face covering while at work and be subject to a COVID-19 test every seven days. The decision was issued *per curiam* by the Court with conservative Justices Neil Gorsuch, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito issuing a separate concurring opinion and the Court's three liberal Justices, Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor, all

dissenting.

The Court found in its decision that OSHA's vaccination-or-test rule operated "as a blunt instrument" across businesses of all different kinds without "distinction based on industry or risk of exposure to COVID-19." In exercising its authority under § 655(c)(1) of the Occupational and Safety Health Act (OSH Act) to issue an emergency temporary standard, the Court found that OSHA can only exercise the authority that Congress had provided to it. OSHA's ETS would have required 84 million Americans to either obtain a COVID-19 vaccine or undergo weekly medical testing at their own expense. The Court found that OSHA's exercise of such authority under § 655(c)(1) "is no 'everyday exercise of federal power,'" but, rather, "a significant encroachment into the lives—and health—of a vast number of employees." The Court held that OSHA had overstepped its authority in issuing its vaccination-or-test mandate because the OSH Act empowers OSHA to set *occupational* safety standards in the workplace, but not broad public health measures. Because COVID-19 can and does spread at home, in schools, during sporting events and everywhere else that people gather, the Court ruled that, while COVID-19 is a hazard, it is not an *occupational* hazard in most workplaces. The Court stated that by "[p]ermitting OSHA to regulate the hazards of daily life—simply because most Americans have jobs and face those same risks while on the clock—would significantly expand OSHA's regulatory authority without clear congressional authorization." The Court concluded that, while "Congress has indisputably given OSHA the power to regulate occupational dangers, it has not given that agency the power to regulate public health more broadly."

The Department of Labor quickly issued a statement (found here) from the U.S. Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh, appearing on OSHA's website addressing the Department of Labor's disappointment in the Court's decision. Secretary Walsh rejected the Court's premise of its ruling that OSHA did not have the authority established by Congress to enact the ETS. Secretary Walsh stated:

> OSHA promulgated the ETS under clear authority established by Congress to protect workers facing grave danger in the workplace, and COVID is without doubt such a danger…We urge all employers to require workers to get vaccinated or tested weekly to most effectively fight this deadly virus in the workplace. Employers are responsible for the safety of their workers on the job, and OSHA has comprehensive COVID-19 guidance to help them uphold their obligation.

Secretary Walsh, in his statement, reminded all employers that OSHA will do everything within its authority to hold employers accountable for protecting workers under its arsenal of enforcement tools, including under OSH Act's General Duty Clause.

For now, the case heads back to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit where that court will determine the final disposition of the applicants' petitions for review of OSHA's ETS.

Depending on the action of the Sixth Circuit, the case could head back to the Supreme Court of the United States for final disposition. We will keep you updated as matters develop in this ongoing case.

As always, O'Neil Cannon is here for you to protect your interests. We encourage you to reach out to our labor and employment law team with any questions, concerns, or legal issues related to workplace safety issues arising from or related to COVID-19.

EMPLOYMENT LAWSCENE ALERT: U.S. SUPREME COURT HALTS OSHA'S VACCINATION-OR-TEST EMERGENCY TEMPORARY STANDARD

The U.S. Supreme Court just issued a decision blocking the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Emergency Temporary Standard that would require employers with 100 or more employees to impose either a mandatory vaccination policy or, alternatively, mandate that unvaccinated workers be required to wear a face covering while at work and be subject to a COVID-19 test every seven days. The Court's three liberal Justices, Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan, and Sonia Sotomayor all dissented. This is a breaking story and we will provide updates as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT LAWSCENE ALERT: U.S. SUPREME COURT TO HOLD SPECIAL SESSION ON JANUARY 7, 2022 TO REVIEW FEDERAL VACCINE MANDATES

On Wednesday, the U.S. Supreme Court issued an order (found here) that it would hold a special session to hear arguments on OSHA's vaccine-or-test rule that mandates employers with 100 or more employees require its employees to be fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus or be subject to weekly tests. The Court issued its order in response to emergency applications for an administrative stay in response to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit's 2-1 decision lifting the stay on OSHA's emergency temporary standard issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit back on November 6th.

The U.S. Supreme Court's one-page order simply reads:

> Consideration of the applications (21A244 and 21A247) for stay presented to Justice Kavanaugh and by him referred to the Court is deferred pending oral argument. The applications are consolidated, and a total of one hour is allotted for oral argument. The applications are set for oral argument on Friday, January 7, 2022.

It is extremely unusual for the Court to hear arguments on an application for a stay, as it is the Court's customary practice to issue such a ruling based solely on the submission of written briefs.

For now, the U.S. Supreme Court has decided to defer its decision on whether to grant a stay until after the January 7th oral arguments. Although the Court is moving on an expedited basis to hear arguments on whether to grant a stay, with OSHA having previously announced that it would begin enforcement on January 10, but would not issue citations for noncompliance with the standard's testing requirements before February 9 so long as an employer is exercising reasonable good faith efforts to comply, employers hoping for a stay before the holidays will have to diligently continue their efforts to take the necessary steps to implement by January 4th either a mandatory vaccination policy or adopt a policy requiring employees to either get vaccinated or elect to undergo regular COVID-19 testing and wear a face covering at work in lieu of vaccination.

As always, we will keep you updated on this important issue as matters develop.

EMPLOYMENT LAWSCENE ALERT: SIXTH CIRCUIT LIFTS STAY OF OSHA'S VACCINATION MANDATE–OSHA FOLLOWS BY ANNOUNCING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

On Friday, December 17, 2021, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit lifted the stay of OSHA's emergency temporary standard (ETS) mandating COVID-19 vaccinations in the workplace or, alternatively, requiring unvaccinated employees to submit to weekly COVID-19 tests. The stay was originally issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on November 5, 2021, when the Fifth Circuit held that OSHA had exceeded its statutory and constitutional authorities when it issued its ETS.

The case was later reassigned to the Sixth Circuit pursuant to a lottery-style drawing in

accordance with the federal rules for multi-circuit litigation. Given that 11 of the 16 active judges on the Sixth Circuit are Republican political appointees, it was surmised that the Sixth Circuit would most likely follow the Fifth Circuit's decision in halting OSHA's ETS in its tracks. However, once the case was reassigned, the first battle fought between the parties began with whether the case should be decided by a traditional three-judge panel or whether the case would be heard en banc where the entire panel of 16 active judges would hear the case. In a decision (found here) that appeared to strongly divide the court, the Sixth Circuit denied the petition for an initial hearing en banc reasoning that a three-judge panel of the court had already devoted a significant amount of time to the case and that an initial hearing en banc would only serve to strain the limited resources of the court to have all 16 active judges devote their attention to the case. The Sixth Circuit's decision, however, included a strongly worded 27-page dissenting opinion from the Sixth Circuit's chief judge arguing that Congress had not "clearly" granted the Secretary of Labor authority to impose OSHA's vaccinate-or-test mandate, especially when the authority to regulate public health and safety has traditionally been regulated by the states. The chief judge also argued in his dissenting opinion that the Secretary of Labor had not met the "grave danger" standard for issuance of OSHA's ETS when (1) the key population group at risk from COVID-19–the elderly–no longer works, (2) members of the work-age population at risk–the unvaccinated–have chosen for themselves to accept the risk and any risk is not grave for most individuals in the group, and (3) the remaining group–the vaccinated–does not face a grave risk by the Secretary's own admission, even if they work with unvaccinated individuals. Many legal experts interpreted the chief judge's dissenting opinion not only as a signal that the three-judge panel assigned to the case was ready to issue a decision to lift the Fifth Circuit's stay, but also could serve as a road map for the U.S. Supreme Court to stop OSHA from implementing its vaccinate-or-test rule.

In a 2-1 decision (found here) dissolving the Fifth Circuit's stay, the Sixth Circuit recognized that Congress had granted the Secretary of Labor "broad authority . . . to promulgate different kinds of standards" for health and safety in the workplace, even ones to address a pandemic that contemplates the use of medical exams and vaccinations as tools in its arsenal. The Sixth Circuit hinged its decision on two primary findings. First, the court found that Congress had granted OSHA broad authority under the Commerce Clause to regulate infectious diseases and viruses to protect the interests of interstate commerce (see 29 U.S.C. § 651(a)), and with that authority can issue an emergency standard to protect workers from a "grave danger" presented by "exposure to substances or agents determined to be toxic or physically harmful" in the workplace–which includes infectious agents such as COVID-19 even though the virus is not unique to the workplace. Second, the Sixth Court found that the ETS does not require anyone to be vaccinated, but, rather, allows employers, themselves, to determine the best way to minimize the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace–whether by mandatory vaccinations or requiring unvaccinated workers to wear a mask on the job and test for COVID-19 weekly. Based on these findings, the Sixth Circuit held that OSHA had met

its burden in issuing the ETS by adequately establishing that: (1) an "emergency" exists relative to the pandemic; (2) the health effects of COVID-19 present a "grave danger" in the workplace; and (3) the ETS is "necessary to protect employees from" the grave danger.

Appeal Filed with U.S. Supreme Court

Those opposing OSHA's ETS immediately appealed the Sixth Circuit's decision to the U.S. Supreme Court by filing an emergency application (found here) for an administrative stay, or alternatively, writ of certiorari before judgment. It would be anticipated that the U.S. Supreme Court, with its conservative majority, will act relatively quickly on whether to issue the petitioned-for stay or to allow the Sixth Circuit's decision to stand and allow OSHA to move forward to implement its vaccinate-or-test rule.

OSHA Moves Forward

With the Fifth Circuit's stay dissolved by the Sixth Circuit's decision, OSHA did not delay in notifying employers that it intends to proceed with implementation and enforcement of its vaccinate-or-test rule. However, OSHA recognizes that many employers have been waiting for some clear direction from the federal courts as to whether OSHA will be permitted to proceed with implementation of its ETS. As a result, OSHA will delay issuance of any citations for noncompliance with any requirements of the emergency standard before January 10 and will not issue citations for noncompliance with the ETS's testing requirements before February 9, so long as an employer is exercising reasonable, good faith efforts to come into compliance with the standard.

What Employers Need to Know

We would expect that the U.S. Supreme Court, at some point, will be directly involved with the ultimate fate of OSHA's vaccinate-or-test rule. If and until the U.S. Supreme Court becomes involved, employers should start, now, the process of drafting the required policies to comply with OSHA's ETS should it survive the legal challenges confronting it. Employers, by making efforts now to comply by at least having policies in place, should the ETS become effective January 5, 2022, absent further court action, should be able to demonstrate to OSHA that it has taken the reasonable and good-faith efforts to comply with the rule. This will be true even if some employees remain unvaccinated, or the weekly COVID-19 testing protocol for unvaccinated employees is not yet fully operational by January 5. However, all employers with 100 or more employees will have to require and enforce by January 5 that all unvaccinated employees wear face coverings as required by the ETS unless such employees are fully vaccinated.

As always, we will keep you updated on this important issue as matters develop.

EMPLOYMENT LAWSCENE ALERT: SIXTH CIRCUIT SELECTED TO HEAR CHALLENGES TO OSHA'S COVID-19 VACCINATION MANDATE

On Tuesday, November 16, 2021, the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation held a lottery-style drawing to select which of the 12 federal circuit court of appeals where petitions for review are currently pending as to which circuit will hear the challenges to OSHA's emergency temporary standard mandating COVID-19 vaccinations in the workplace. Through that lottery process, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit was selected. As a result, the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation issued a consolidation order consolidating before the Sixth Circuit all of the petitions for review now pending in the various federal circuit court of appeals.

On Friday, November 12, 2021, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued a 22-page decision (linked here) continuing its November 6th order that stayed the implementation and enforcement of OSHA's emergency temporary standard mandating COVID-19 vaccinations in the workplace. Subsequently, OSHA issued a statement in response to the Fifth Circuit's decision that it would suspend the implementation and enforcement of its emergency temporary standard pending the outcome of the litigation. Relative to the Fifth Circuit's decision, the Sixth Circuit has three options as it can either adopt, modify, or vacate the Fifth Circuit's decision.

The Sixth Circuit, located in Cincinnati, Ohio, oversees the federal district courts covering the states of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. There are 16 total judges on the Sixth Circuit: 11 Republican appointees and 5 Democratic appointees. Six of the Republican appointees were appointed by President Trump and five were appointed by President George W. Bush, while the five Democratic appointments were made by Presidents Clinton and Obama. Although the consolidated petitions for review will be heard by a randomly selected three judge panel, based on the overall makeup of the Sixth Circuit, the chances are relatively high that the mandate will continue to be blocked.

Despite the possible variations of the makeup of the randomly selected judicial panel from the Sixth Circuit, the case could be heard by the Sixth Circuit *en banc* (meaning that the full judicial panel consisting of all judges in regular active service could decide the case). The Sixth Circuit disfavors *en banc* proceedings unless the proceeding involves a question of exceptional importance. To hear a case *en banc*, a majority of the circuit judges who are in regular active service and who are not disqualified may order that the case be heard or reheard by the court *en banc*. It will be interesting to see if the Sixth Circuit decides to permit

the consolidated petitions for review to proceed before a randomly selected three-judge panel or if it will decide to initially hear the case *en banc*. For now, the Fifth Circuit's stay remains in place.

As always, we will keep you updated on this important issue as matters develop.