



2023

# EMPLOYMENT LAW SEMINAR

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PRESENTED BY

TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

12 October, 2023 | 8.00 AM - 4.00 PM CDT | Nashville, TN

# WELCOME MESSAGE

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**Muriel Malone Nolen**  
Executive Director, THRC

Dear Attendees,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to participate in the 2023 Employment Law Seminar. The Employment Law Seminar (ELS) is hosted by the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, in partnership with the State of Tennessee Department of Human Resources and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The ELS will bring together legal experts to train and update stakeholders on current and pressing issues in employment law.

Throughout this day-long event, you will learn from the best in order to build on your own organization's strengths and address opportunities for improvements. The objective is to empower attorneys and human resource professionals and equip them with the knowledge necessary to support and implement the latest best practices for anti-discrimination and inclusive policies. The mission of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission is to safeguard individuals from discrimination through education and enforcement.

Sincerely,

*Muriel M. Nolen*  
MURIEL MALONE NOLEN, ESQ.  
Executive Director  
Tennessee Human Rights Commission

# WELCOME MESSAGE

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## Juan Williams

Commissioner, DOHR

Welcome to the 2023 Employment Law Seminar!

Within DOHR, our values include customer focus and data informed decision as we serve the State of Tennessee employees.

In partnering with the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, our customer, the goal of this annual event is to present relevant information and tools to support you in your day-to-day operations. We will share content that deal with current issues and situations in employment law that you as leaders may be facing or could potentially encounter.

We have speakers with important information to share with you, I ask that you “Be Here Now,” giving your full attention to each subject matter as it is presented.

In closing, I would like to thank each of you for participating in this years’ conference and bringing your expertise. You, as leaders, have the vision, knowledge and experience to help us pave our way into the future. You are truly our greatest asset today and tomorrow, and we could not accomplish what we do without your support and leadership.

Again, welcome and thank you for attending.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Williams', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Juan Williams  
Commissioner, Department of Human Resources

# ELS AGENDA



## MORNING

- 8:00am **Registration & Breakfast**  
State your “Why”
- 8:30am **Welcome & Opening Remarks**  
Muriel Nolen. Executive Director, THRC  
Edmond C. Sims. District Director, EEOC Memphis  
Lesley T. Farmer. Deputy Commissioner &  
General Counsel, DOHR
- 8:45am **THRC: Where We’ve Been &  
Where We’re Going**  
Muriel Nolen. Executive Director, THRC
- 9:15am **Service Animals in the Workplace**  
Melanie Koewler. Deputy General Counsel, DOHR  
Andrew Puryear. Senior Associate Counsel, DOHR  
Lauren Dougall. CEO, Retrieving Independence
- 10:15am **Break**  
Door Prize Raffle #1
- 10:30am **EEOC Updates**  
Edmond C. Sims. District Director, EEOC Memphis
- 11:30am **Lunch**  
Door Prize Raffle #2





# AFTERNOON

# ELS AGENDA

- 12:30pm Keynote: Navigating Difficult Disability Issues in 2023 & Beyond  
Fred Bissinger. Partner, FordHarrison LLP.
- 1:30pm Break  
Door Prize #3
- 1:45pm What's Going On? Thoughts on Current Hot Topics in Employment  
Luther Wright Jr. Shareholder, Ogletree Deakins
- 2:45pm The Professional Duty of Self Care  
Buddy Stockwell. Executive Director, Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program
- 3:45pm Closing Remarks & Evaluation  
Tremecca D. Doss. General Counsel, THRC  
Door Prize Raffle #4
- 4:00pm Adjournment



# ABOUT TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Tennessee Human Rights Commission is an independent state agency created in 1963 to encourage, promote, and advise the public of their human rights. In 1978, the Commission transformed into an enforcement agency through the passage of the Tennessee Human Rights Act (THRA), and, later, the Tennessee Disability Act (TDA), which together prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, disability, familial status (housing only), and age (40 and over in employment). The Commission also ensures the state's compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin by state agencies receiving federal financial assistance. The Commission has workshare agreements with the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These workshare agreements provide the Commission with authority to investigate discrimination claims filed under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, known as the Fair Housing Act, as amended. The Commission's mission is to safeguard individuals from discrimination through education and enforcement.

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The Commission is governed by a nine-member board of commissioners appointed by the Governor, the Lt. Governor, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to represent the three Grand Divisions of the state. A 33-member staff of investigators, attorneys, and other professional support personnel carry out the day-to-day duties of conducting thorough investigations and educating the public about their rights and responsibilities. Staff duties include the receipt, investigation, and, when necessary, litigation of alleged discrimination complaints. When parties agree, the Commission conducts mediation and conciliation as means to resolve complaints. It also provides technical assistance to state agencies for complying with Title VI and education to the public about their rights and responsibilities under the THRA and TDA laws. The Tennessee Human Rights Commission maintains its central office in Nashville and has regional offices in Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Memphis.

# 2023 ELS PRESENTERS



## **Muriel Malone Nolen**

Executive Director  
Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Introduced by Veronica McGraw  
Deputy Director. THRC



## **Melanie Koewler**

Deputy General Counsel  
Tennessee Department of Human  
Resources

Introduced by Jacob Aparicio  
Communications Director. THRC



## **Andrew Puryear**

Senior Associate Counsel  
Tennessee Department of Human  
Resources

Introduced by Jacob Aparicio  
Communications Director. THRC



# 2023 ELS PRESENTERS



## **Lauren Dougall**

Chief Executive Officer  
Retrieving Independence

Introduced by Jacob Aparicio  
Communications Director. THRC



## **Edmond C. Sims, Jr.**

Acting District Director  
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity  
Commission Memphis District Office

Introduced by Veronica McGraw  
Deputy Director. THRC





# KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## Fred Bissinger

Introduced by Tremecca Doss  
General Counsel. THRC

Fred's practice focuses on coaching, counseling, and advising clients on difficult employee issues, especially those involving complicated disability scenarios, including mental health and addiction issues, as well as a broad spectrum of problematic behavioral issues, terminations, reductions-in-force, and job elimination scenarios. He regularly trains management teams on a variety of employment law topics and advises on policy development and implementation. Fred routinely handles employment discrimination and wrongful discharge matters at both the administrative level and in federal and state court litigation, and conducts complex investigations directly for clients and as a neutral third-party. Fred also assists clients with labor related issues, including navigating grievances and CBA compliance issues.

Prior to entering private practice, Fred served in the United States Navy Judge Advocate General Corps from 1993-1997. He also served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office from 1994 to 1996.



**FORDHARRISON**



# 2023 ELS PRESENTERS



## **Luther Wright Jr.**

Shareholder

Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak &  
Stewart, PC.

Introduced by Veronica McGraw  
Deputy Director. THRC



## **Buddy Stockwell**

Executive Director

Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program

Introduced by William Wade  
Associate General Counsel. THRC



# THANK YOU! ELS SUPPORTERS

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Jacob Aparicio - THRC
- Melissa Brown - EEOC
- Lynn Cothren - THRC
- Tracy Davidson - THRC
- Tremecca Doss - THRC
- Melanie Koewler - DOHR
- Veronica McGraw - THRC
- Andrew Puryear - DOHR
- William Wade - THRC

## SPECIAL THANKS

- FordHarrison, LLP
- Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, PC.
- Retrieving Independence
- Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program
- Tennessee State Library & Archives Building

## PARTNERS



# MISSION

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Safeguarding Individuals From Discrimination  
Through Education and Enforcement



Human Rights  
Commission

## Tennessee Human Rights Commission

William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower  
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue | 23rd Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243

### Contact Information

**Phone:** 800-251-3589

**Website:** [www.TN.gov/HumanRights](http://www.TN.gov/HumanRights)

**Email:** [ASK.THRC@tn.gov](mailto:ASK.THRC@tn.gov)



@TNHumanRights



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