

A Message from Your Current Presidents, Janine Dunn & Katie Quackenbush

To our HRLA members and friends,

The end of the year is traditionally a time to reflect on the year that's passed and prepare for the year to come. Looking back, we've had a number of chapter successes and accomplishments we're proud of.

- SHRM awarded our chapter the **Bronze Excel Award** for our initiatives in support of the HR profession and the activities we planned that met the needs of HR professionals in 2020.
- We continued to provide **monthly programs** on a wide variety of timely HR topics. This included a collaborative event with HRACC and the CT State Council in October, and our first in-person event in 18 months: our annual Legal Update.
- We significantly expanded and updated the **job hunting resources** in the career center section of our website to assist individuals who found themselves in career transitions as a result of the pandemic. (continued pg 2)

Inside This Issue:

- Chapter News
- CT SHRM Career Fair
- A Legal Update on Vaccine Mandates
- CT Paid FML Information
- Special Recognition from SHRM
- And more!

We want to hear from you! Contact info@hrla.org with questions, ideas, and feedback

A Message from Your Incoming President, Evan Murphy

Hello HRLA Family!

For those of you I haven't been fortunate enough to meet, chat with or make acquaintances with in a tiny digital Zoom window...I'd like to introduce myself as your new chapter president! My introduction to the chapter started as a guest, and quickly blossomed into a sponsor. From the very first meeting I was struck by the warmth, openness, collaborative spirit and the inviting nature of the members. Sometimes being a "guest" who isn't a decorated HR professional can leave you feeling like an outsider. To my surprise, I felt none of that. It spoke volumes about the chapter and their true sense of inclusion. After quickly joining, I became a regular attendee and found so much value in the connections and content. When I was offered a board role as treasurer, I was honored and have greatly enjoyed getting to know the chapter from a whole different view.

And then... the pandemic. There aren't enough words to truly capture how this impacted all of us. I felt and saw the first-hand struggles we were all forced and still grappling to endure. Being a part of HRLA during this difficult time gave even greater perspective. I'm incredibly proud of the chapter and board members for their ability to adapt and serve Eastern Connecticut's HR and Business community. All of our inner resiliency was tested and our ability to project, predict and provide is something we should all celebrate. (continued pg 2)



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A Message from Janine & Katie (continued from pg 1)

- Some of our members participated in a **youth manufacturing pipeline initiative**, spearheaded by the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce. This event helped manufacturing companies find new talent, and helped kids who will soon be graduating from high school learn how to successfully interview for manufacturing jobs.
- And after a significant decline in membership last year, we successfully grew our **membership** back to a pre-pandemic level. Currently, we have 89 members, with 40 holding at least one HR certification!

We were unable to celebrate HRLA's 20th anniversary in 2020 due to Covid-19, but we had a wonderful celebration on December 8, 2021. Thank you to all who attended, to our charter and long-time members who have been with us for so long, to our chapter leaders, past and present, who helped lead our chapter's success and especially to all of our members. We appreciate you and your contributions to our chapter and the HR profession and look forward to many more years together.

Looking ahead to 2022, our team is putting together a fantastic lineup of programs on topics you've asked for, like Recognizing and Responding to Microaggressions; Talent Acquisition, and How to be a Strategic HR Partner... plus we'll be holding TWO legal update events to help keep everyone informed and up-to-date.

We're thankful to all our volunteers who helped make this year a success, and we're confident that with Evan Murphy as our next President, the chapter will be in good hands next year. It's been an honor to serve as your co-Presidents this year. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

We wish you a happy and healthy holiday season and new year.

With gratitude,
Janine Dunn & Katie Quackenbush
HRLA co-Presidents 2020-2021

A Message from Evan (continued from pg 1)

I would be remiss to not acknowledge our outgoing Presidents Katie Quackenbush and Janine Dunn. Their leadership in this turbulent interim has been critical in our continued prosperity. Personally, their mentorship has been invaluable and without them I'm not sure I would have been confident enough to accept the great honor of being your new President.

The future may seem uneasy. Our comfort zones don't feel so comfortable. Though I believe there isn't a stronger, more compassionate or determined group than Human Resource Leadership Association of Eastern CT. We will all continue to support each other, share and navigate our ways into a better 2022 and beyond. So, I hope you'll join us for our upcoming slate of fantastic meetings with smiling faces and enjoy the same feelings of connection that endeared me to this amazing chapter!

I don't have a parting inspirational quote for all of you, but I'll share the quote from Janine Dunn that was echoed throughout our board meetings and always makes me smile... "I miss the hugs!"

I'm honored, humbled and deeply appreciative of this opportunity.

All the Best,
Evan Murphy
HRLA President 2022-2023

Chapter News

UPCOMING EVENT January 20 at 12:00pm (an online event)

Retirement Plan Fiduciary? I'm an HR professional!

A 401k/403b Plan Fiduciary Discussion and Trends Review for the HR Professional

Many HR professionals enter the field with the prospect of putting their natural interpersonal skills, knack for organization, and desire to be a part of big things to work. Most are faced with being part of a Retirement Plan Committee, without much training or even knowing the responsibilities required of them as a plan fiduciary. The last 2-3 years has seen a significant increase in Lawsuits in the 401k/403b world. Taking proactive forward thinking "Fiduciary Based" steps/processes is key for plan sponsors. Our speakers will highlight some Best Practices that sponsors should strongly consider. Join Pamela Minish, CFA, CAIA and Stuart Herskowitz, AIF, of Hooker & Holcombe's Investment Advisory Group as they provide an overview of Fiduciary Basics, including:

- Fiduciary Standards and Governance Best Practices
- Trends in 401(k)/403(b) benchmarking and plan design
- Understanding Mutual fund share classes
- Recent Lawsuit Activity in the Defined Contribution markets
- Takeaway Action steps that you can share with your organization

Register at
www.hrlact.org



Congratulations

LESLIE BARTHOLOMEW

Leslie was awarded the 2021 HRLA Scholarship in support of her pursuit of an MBA in Strategic Leadership with a concentration in HR Training and Development



**Have You
Renewed Yet?**

**Most memberships end on
December 31st**

Renew online at
www.hrlact.org.

Employers are in limbo (again): The uncertain state of vaccine mandates

by Paula Anthony, HRLA Legislative Liaison

On November 4, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued its long-anticipated Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS), requiring employers with 100 or more employees to ensure their employees are vaccinated against COVID-19 or submit to weekly COVID-19 testing by January 4, 2022. The ETS also required employers to determine the vaccine status of their employees by December 5, 2021 and require unvaccinated employees to wear masks by that date. The rule was expected to cover more than 80 million workers.

On November 6, 2021, a federal court issued an injunction halting OSHA's implementation of its ETS, throwing a wrench into the relevant compliance timelines. OSHA subsequently announced suspension of its enforcement of the rule pending a ruling from the court. While it is unknown when the court may rule on the matter, given the briefing schedule, it is clear the previous timelines will have to be extended if the court upholds the ETS. It is possible the Supreme Court may ultimately be called upon to decide the fate of OSHA's mandate-or-test rule.

So what is an employer to do in the interim? Many employers, perhaps seeking the cover of a government mandate, have adopted a "wait and see" approach. However, while the challenges to the federal mandates are based largely on claims the mandates are an overreach by the federal government and/or its agencies, the courts have largely upheld employer-imposed mandatory vaccine policies. Several large employers like CVS Health, Facebook, major airlines, and health care facilities began implementing mandatory vaccine policies over the summer when cases began to rise again as a result of the Delta variant. Given that it could take weeks to implement a compliant vaccine policy should OSHA prevail, employers covered under the ETS should prepare by creating a compliant policy in the likely event that the ETS or some modified version is upheld.

The OSHA rule does not apply to employers covered by other federal mandates directed at healthcare providers and federal contractors; however, those directives have also been the subject of similar challenges. Recently, a federal court imposed a nationwide injunction blocking implementation of the CMS rule requiring certain healthcare providers to implement mandatory vaccine policies for their employees or risk losing federal Medicare and Medicaid funding. In addition, in late November, a federal judge temporarily blocked the federal contractor mandate from taking effect in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Shortly thereafter, a temporary nationwide ban was imposed by a federal judge in Georgia. As of this writing, all three federal COVID-19 vaccine mandates are stayed pending further litigation.

Those employers subject to mandatory vaccine requirements under Connecticut Executive Orders 13F (healthcare facilities) and 13G (state employees and school employees) remain subject to those requirements, which went into effect in late September 2021.

Stay tuned . . .



Paula Anthony is a Partner in the Labor & Employment Law practice group at Berchem Moses PC. She advises private and public sector employers on a wide variety of personnel and employment matters including mediation, grievance arbitration and employment litigation, as well as extensive experience in conducting workplace investigations.

1.26.22



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Are You Ready? Big changes to Connecticut's FMLA and Paid Family and Medical Leave go into effect January 1

by Paula Anthony, HRLA Legislative Liaison

In 2019, Connecticut joined neighboring states New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island in passing a paid leave bill. Under the PFMLA employees may be eligible for paid leave for life events covered under the federal and state FMLA, and the Connecticut Family Violence Leave Act. The bill also made sweeping changes to the State's FMLA laws. While employee payroll deductions for paid leave benefits began in January 2021, availability of paid leave benefits and implementation of the changes to CTFMLA were deferred until January 1, 2022.

Effective January 1, qualified employees will be eligible for up to 12 weeks of replacement wages, payable up to a maximum of 95 % for those earning less than or equal to 40 times the state minimum wage and capped at 60 times the state minimum wage for those earning more. Employees with a serious health condition resulting in incapacitation during pregnancy could get an additional 2 weeks paid leave. Although the law allows employers to seek approval for a private plan, for most employers, the paid leave benefits will be administered by the State's Paid Leave Authority. The Authority began accepting applications for benefits on December 1, 2021.

Additionally, all private sector employers with at least one employee will be required to provide job protected leave for eligible employees under Connecticut's FMLA , a significant change from the previous 75 employee threshold. While the new law shortens the amount of leave from 16 weeks to 12 weeks, it also shortens the length of time an employee must work before becoming eligible from 12 months and 1000 hours to 12 weeks with no minimum hour requirement.

There are several other significant changes going forward:

- employers requiring employees to use employer-provided paid time off must allow those employees to retain at least 2 weeks of paid leave; and
- the definition of "family member" is broadened to include siblings, parent-in-laws, grandparents, grandchildren, and "individuals related to the employee by blood or affinity whose close association the employee shows to be the equivalent of those family relationships."

In addition to private sector employees, the law covers non-union State employees, as well as unionized municipal and local or regional board of employees whose bargaining units have negotiated inclusion in the paid leave program. In those cases where unionized public employees have negotiated inclusion, non-union employees for those employers would also be covered.

Hopefully, given the lead time to prepare for these changes, most employers are ready. If not, better review those leave policies! Resources, including an HR Toolkit are available on the Paid Leave Authority's website <https://ctpaidleave.org>

OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Angela Anderson

Seamus Hastings

Maureen Sullivan Smith

Jennifer Barry

Teresa Kramer

Emma Stuart

Francheska Codero

Eduardo Maia

Mackenzie Sullivan

Monica Coughlin

Katherine McDonald

Meghan Thompson

Gina Donovan

Alexis Salvagna

Lori Thompson

Joe Glenn

Lisa Sanders

Tom Wright

Welcome!



Have something to contribute to the newsletter such as event pictures or interesting HR articles? Send your contributions to communications@hrlact.org

Your 2022 Chapter Leadership Team

-Executive Committee-

President: Evan Murphy
Secretary: Sandy Lamotte
Treasurer: Jodie Bartnicki
VP Programs: Tam Higgins
Immediate Past Presidents: Janine Dunn & Katie Quackenbush

-Other Board Members-

VP Communications - Leslie Bartholomew
Certifications - John DeVivo
Legislative Liaison - Paula Anthony
College Relations - David Gallagher
Diversity & Inclusion - Linda Ferraro

December 1, 2021

Janine Dunn, Co-President
Katie Quackenbush, Co-President
Human Resource Leadership Association of Eastern Connecticut

Dear Janine and Katie:

I am thrilled to celebrate the Human Resource Leadership Association of Eastern Connecticut (HRLA) as you commemorate your 20th landmark anniversary and its 20-year affiliation with SHRM. As you look back to the journey HRLA embarked upon two decades ago, take pride in all you have accomplished and be inspired by the vision, resilience, and resourcefulness it has taken to realize all of the success you have achieved.

Since its founding in 2000, the Chapter has been consummate stewards of the HR profession working to create better workplaces throughout the Eastern Connecticut and Western Rhode Island region. SHRM is honored to acknowledge the stellar leadership exhibited by a host of volunteers who see HR as a calling. Your passion for HR is profound and is reflected in the tremendous body of achievement that we here recognize. The Chapter was awarded SHRM's Superior Merit Chapter and Platinum Excel awards. Just last year, HRLA received a bronze Excel Award. These feats are a testament to HRLA's steadfast devotion to advancing the interest of local HR professionals and the businesses they faithfully serve.

As HRLA commemorates this remarkable milestone, I would like to extend my personal gratitude to the many volunteers whose time, energy and spirit has forged Chapter success over the years. Your commitment shines in each late-night phone call, afterwork meeting, and early morning email that uplifts both SHRM and our profession as the voice of all things work, workers and workplaces.

On behalf of the SHRM Board of Directors and our staff, I see you, thank you and applaud you for all the work you do—and have been doing for 20 plus years. You truly embody SHRM's charge of creating a better workplace and better world.

Sincerely,



Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SEP
President & CEO
SHRM

[Click here to view a special
HRLA 20th Anniversary message
from Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.](#)

