

Grant & Eisenhofer Launches Civil Rights Practice, Headed by Former Chief of Civil Rights Bureau for Illinois Attorney General Karyn Bass Ehler

Ms. Bass Ehler most recently served as Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau under Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan; helped direct litigation and negotiation of historic Chicago Police Department Consent Decree; brings experience handling civil rights cases involving police misconduct, excessive force, immigrants' rights, discrimination, sexual harassment, labor trafficking and other abuses; new practice complements G&E's recent work representing victims of sexual assault and discrimination

CHICAGO (March 25, 2019) – Leading plaintiffs' law firm **Grant & Eisenhofer** announced the formation of a new Civil Rights practice, led by **Karyn Bass Ehler**, who joins as senior counsel in the firm's Chicago office.

Ms. Bass Ehler brings a distinguished track record in civil rights matters in both private practice and the public sector. She most recently served as Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau for the Illinois Attorney General. Among numerous high-profile cases she oversaw during her four-year tenure, Ms. Bass Ehler was one of the lead counsel in *State of Illinois v. City of Chicago*, which resulted in a historic consent decree in 2019 to reform alleged misconduct within the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

Working alongside then-Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Ms. Bass Ehler oversaw investigations and prosecutions of cases alleging patterns and practices of discrimination across the state, including cases alleging racial, gender, age and disability discrimination. She frequently directed strategy, litigation, legislation and policy initiatives on behalf of the office through a civil rights lens.

At Grant & Eisenhofer, Ms. Bass Ehler will help direct a new docket of cases addressing civil rights violations.

G&E managing director **Jay Eisenhofer** said of Ms. Bass Ehler's arrival: "We're excited to be forming a new civil rights unit to focus on social justice cases of national importance. There is a need for greater trial expertise in civil rights matters and we couldn't be more fortunate to have Karyn Bass Ehler lead this initiative for the firm. Her work at the Illinois AG's office resulted in significant reforms to the Chicago Police Department and other agencies and institutions. Throughout her career she has made an impact on advocating for civil rights stemming from discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence, labor trafficking, wrongful conviction, and excessive force."

"Unfortunately, civil rights abuses of all kinds persist across America – in the workplace, in business and commerce, in police interactions with the public, and in government," Mr. Eisenhofer added. "We think we have a chance to make an impact in challenging many of these wrongs with Karyn overseeing our litigation in this vital area."

In *State of Illinois v. City of Chicago*, the Illinois Attorney General sued the Chicago Police Department, alleging failures in police training which led to excessive force against minorities as well as other types of misconduct. Ms. Bass Ehler's work resulted in a first-of-its-kind consent decree on this scale led by a state AG office, addressing comprehensive and systemic reform of the nation's second largest police department. The state brought its action after the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) under then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions declined to pursue a consent decree, despite DOJ's comprehensive report finding that CPD engaged in a pattern or practice of using force, in violation of the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution, due to systemic deficiencies in CPD training and accountability.

While serving as chief of the Civil Rights Bureau, Ms. Bass Ehler successfully led legislative initiatives on campus sexual assault in 2015 as well as an effort to expand Illinois' hate crimes law in 2017. She also focused on immigrants' rights, including cases involving DACA students and fighting the Trump Administration's travel ban. And she led litigation that resulted in the shutting down of employment agencies that recruited undocumented Latinos to work in inhumane conditions around the Midwest.

Prior to joining the Illinois AG's office, Ms. Bass Ehler was a partner at Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym in Chicago, focusing on civil rights litigation.

"I have devoted my entire career to advancing civil rights through litigation and policy. I am extremely passionate about these cases, which so often affect individuals who may not have the means, ability or resources to challenge the systemic inequities they face," Ms. Bass Ehler said.

"I'm looking forward to returning to private practice and joining Grant & Eisenhofer in building a dedicated civil rights group," she added. "G&E is one of the country's preeminent plaintiffs' firms, with a stellar history representing investors and more recently, women and families who have been harmed by corporate misconduct and defective products. Through its new civil rights practice, I'm hoping to add to the firm's record by bringing cases focused on civil rights abuses."

G&E's civil rights practice is the most recent expansion of the firm's advocacy platforms on behalf of plaintiffs. In the past decade, the firm has grown beyond its core practice of securities litigation to include: consumer class actions, whistleblower cases involving the False Claims Act, mass tort and environmental suits, birth injury litigation, bankruptcy matters, and intellectual property disputes. G&E has secured more than \$27 billion on behalf of clients in the last ten years, and has directed more securities-related cases resulting in nine-figure recoveries for plaintiffs than perhaps any other firm.

Ms. Bass Ehler received her Bachelor of Arts degree, with honors, from Northwestern University, and her J.D., *cum laude*, from DePaul University College of Law, where she was the Editor-in-Chief of the *DePaul Law Review* and a Dean's Merit Scholar. After law school, she clerked for Judge William J. Bauer on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and Judge Matthew F. Kennelly on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Ms. Bass Ehler is a co-founder and board member for the Center on Public Interest Law at the DePaul University College of Law, and vice president for the board of directors with the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs. She also serves on the Quality Jobs Council for Women Employed.

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