

WHY ADOPT AND UPDATE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS?

You have heard about the proliferation in litigation brought by disgruntled employees. You may be unaware, however, of the unwritten rule that keeps employment defense attorneys awake at night: Employees win if the case gets to a jury. The defense attorney's job, therefore, is to convince a judge that the case should not go to a jury. That is where carefully crafted handbooks can be helpful.

On the most basic level, it makes good sense to tell employees what they can expect from you and what you expect from them. The growth of wrongful termination lawsuits and the creation and expansion of complex state and federal laws governing occupational safety, discrimination, family and medical leave, payroll requirements, welfare benefit plan rules and the like make effective written communication more vital than ever. Handbooks can reduce liability risks and protect your interests by:

- ◆ expressly preserving employees' at-will status
- ◆ authorizing only owners to enter into contractual arrangements with employees
- ◆ establishing clear discrimination and harassment policies (so important after the latest US Supreme Court decisions)
- ◆ accurately setting forth benefits and the conditions under which they are accrued and paid
- ◆ establishing clear rules for paying exempt employees
- ◆ establishing policies requiring employees to respect trade secrets and client confidences
- ◆ setting out required procedures for employees to follow in returning from occupational injuries or leaves of absence
- ◆ creating leave policies consistent with both federal and state requirements (have you updated your leave policies to incorporate the new victim leave requirements?)

We would be happy to assist you in putting together or updating an employee handbook tailored to your particular needs. The total cost for these services is typically \$850. Please contact Kevin Burgess or Jaclyn Semple in our Eugene office at (541) 484-2277, in Roseburg at (541) 673-5528, or in Corvallis at (541) 757-1365 for further information.

