



Laurel Gift Counsel

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Laurel Gift is counsel in the Litigation Services Department and co-chairs the Criminal Defense practice group and the Internal Investigations, Ethics and Compliance practice group. She concentrates her practice in the area of internal investigations for institutions of higher education, municipalities, and private businesses and representing corporate and individual clients in a variety of criminal matters.

Ms. Gift's internal investigations practice includes representation of institutions of higher education during sensitive and potentially volatile allegations. Her work includes crafting comprehensive investigation plans and overseeing all aspects of investigative work. Ensuring investigative integrity serves as her guidepost as she conducts and oversees investigations.

Ms. Gift's criminal defense practice includes representation of individual and corporate clients who are under investigation by state and federal law enforcement. She represents witnesses and targets of investigations before state investigating grand juries and federal indicting grand juries. Ms. Gift has represented pharmacists, medical providers, and medical practice groups during investigations relating to prescription drug practices. Ms. Gift also has extensive experience representing scientists, professional engineers, and professional geologists during criminal investigations involving the oil and gas industry.

Ms. Gift also provides ethics and compliance counseling to individual and corporate clients. She has represented engineering companies in the design and implementation of corporate ethics programs and currently supports the University of Pittsburgh in establishing its new office of Compliance, Investigations &

Ethics. She has counseled individuals under investigation by the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission and state licensing boards.

Ms. Gift is a Certified Information Privacy Professional who serves as Privacy Officer to a large public university. Ms. Gift has been instrumental in revising HIPAA policies and implementing an institution-wide privacy compliance program, which includes compliance with FERPA, HIPAA, GLBA, GDPR, and the Red Flags Rule.

Before entering private practice, Ms. Gift served as a Senior Deputy Attorney General for the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General and as an Assistant District Attorney in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

Representative Matters

- Represented large international labor union during federal grand jury investigation, conducting internal investigation of over 15 areas of concerns. The successful completion of these investigations allowed Union leaders to make significant operational decisions and improve upon existing policies and practices.
- Conducted an internal investigation for a large public university arising out of misconduct in an athletics program, which positioned the university to respond, make public comment when appropriate, and effect positive change.
- Successfully represented witnesses and targets of a statewide investigation of the failure to report and respond to child abuse by religious organizations. Provide counsel to high-ranking cleric during ongoing internal inquiry concerning allegations of financial mismanagement and other improprieties.
- Represented the dean of a mid-size public university during a joint investigation by the PA State Ethics Commission and Office of Attorney General, which resulted in the conclusion of both investigations without legal action.
- Represented individual and corporate tax payers during a criminal IRS investigation for under reporting and failing to report income, which resulted in the closure of the investigation without criminal charges or civil penalties.
- Conducted an internal investigation for a small church relating to allegations of sexual misconduct with minors. The comprehensive investigation allowed church leaders to make critical employment decisions, improve upon existing policies, and document their efforts to protect children.
- Conducted an internal investigation for a college concerning allegations of sexual misconduct by former personnel, which positioned the university to respond effectively, document its response, and ensure that its students were adequately protected.
- Conduct internal investigations for municipal school districts in Western Pennsylvania in response to allegations ranging from teacher misconduct with students to waste, fraud and abuse. Investigations positioned local school district to effectively and decisively respond to allegations.
- Successfully represented individual witnesses and employees of a large public university during criminal investigations of fraternity hazing.
- Implement code of business ethics for national engineering firm, which positioned the client to

compete for federal contracts.

Community and Pro Bono

Ms. Gift's community and pro bono focus is on criminal justice reform and access to justice. She represented a juvenile life prisoner seeking a new sentence following the *Miller* and *Montgomery* decisions and is now working toward a request for commutation. She also works with the Innocence Project in raising claims of actual innocence.

- State Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Chairperson, Allegheny County Chapter, Pennsylvania Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Member, Criminal Justice Act Panel for the U.S. District Court of Western Pennsylvania
- Member, Fellows Program, Allegheny County Bar Foundation
- The Himalayan Institute, Certified Yoga Instructor, 2004-present
- Steel City Boxing Association, Volunteer, 2012-2015
- The Sprout Fund, Advisory Board Member, 2004-2008

Education

- Hastings College of the Law, J.D., 2000
- University of California, Santa Cruz, B.A., Legal Studies and Environmental Studies, 1997

Bar Admissions

- Pennsylvania, 2001

Court Admissions

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio

Professional Affiliations

- Pennsylvania Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Member, 2014-2020; Allegheny Chapter Founder and Chairperson, 2016-2020; Advocacy Committee Co-Chair, 2018-2020; State Board of Directors, 2018-2020 and Vice President (Western District), 2019-2020
- Allegheny County Bar Association, Member
- Women's White Collar Defense Association, Member
- Certified Information Privacy Professional/US (CIPP/US)
- International Association of Privacy Professionals, Member, 2020-present

Other Distinctions

- Recipient of the Burton Award for the Finest Law Firm Writers of 2018

Practices

- Criminal Defense
- Internal Investigations, Ethics & Compliance
- Litigation
- Privacy and Data Security
- Securities Litigation

Industries

- Higher Education
- Communications and Media