

# Royal Newsletter

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## Reminder

We can provide you with our diversity certifications to demonstrate that you do business with a certified woman-owned company.

## Check Out Our Blog

### [Women In Labor](#)

## Contact Us

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## Firm News



We are excited to announce the addition of Attorney Jeremy Saint Laurent to The Royal Law Firm.

Jeremy joins us with extensive litigation experience, having worked as the head of the litigation department for the City of Springfield.

Please join us in welcoming Jeremy to our team!

## In the Community

The Royal Law Firm was honored to be a signature cocktail sponsor at CHD's Cancer House of Hope Golf Tournament on September 13, 2021.

The Royal Law Firm was honored to sponsor Joan Kagan's Retirement Party. The event was held on Thursday, October 14, 2021. Joan was the former President and CEO of Square One, retiring last December after 45 years of human services. Thank you for everything Joan!

The Royal Law Firm was proud to be a sponsor of the Springfield Ballers first annual Ballers' Ball held on November 13, 2021. Springfield Ballers provides affordable opportunities to youth in athletics through programs that promote academic achievement and overall health and wellness for the purpose of creating a complete and well-rounded student athlete.

## Employment Law Updates

### Updated Guidance on Religious Objections to Employer COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates

As the world continues to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers have begun to require employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition of their employment. This has undoubtedly raised many questions an employer's ability to mandate that their employees get vaccinated. On October 25, 2021, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released updated guidance to address questions about Title VII and religious objections to employer COVID-19 vaccine mandates.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects an employee from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. Likewise, Title VII requires employers to accommodate employees' "sincerely held religious beliefs, practices, or observances absent undue hardship." This includes the requirement that employers consider requests of employees who seek to be exempt from a COVID-19 vaccination requirement based on a sincerely held religious belief.

Employees who wish to be exempt from a vaccine mandate due to a sincerely held religious belief must inform their employer of this. Employers must then demonstrate that "undue hardship" is not required to accommodate the request. It is important to note that Title VII does not require employers to consider requests for exemption based on social, political, or economic views, or personal preference of the employee. The ability to grant or deny a requested exemption rests heavily on the elements of "undue hardship" and a showing of a sincerely held religious belief.

### Massachusetts Extends COVID Leave Into 2022

On September 29, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker made it official. Paid COVID leave has been extended to April 1, 2022. The law had been set to expire tomorrow on October 1. All prior portions of the law remain in effect. The law applies to employers of any size and provides for up to 40 hours of paid sick leave for the following reasons:

- To self-isolate because of the employee's COVID diagnosis;
- To obtain medical care or treatment for, or seek a diagnosis of COVID;
- To obtain or recover from the COVID vaccine;
- To care for a family member who has COVID or is self-isolating; or
- To help a family member obtain a vaccine or recover from an injury or illness related to the vaccine.

The law provides a maximum benefit allowance of \$850. Wage reimbursement is available to employers that pay out COVID time-off. If the \$75 million allocated for this purpose is exhausted at some point in time earlier than April 1, 2022, the law will no longer be in effect.

**If you have any questions about any labor and employment law matters, please contact the attorneys at The Royal Law Firm at (413) 586-2288.**

