

# Ralph J. Teti

## Retired Partner

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Ralph Teti labors in the trenches, representing public and private sector unions and their members in negotiations, grievance and interest arbitrations, in state and federal courts, and before numerous boards, agencies and commissions. He often serves in the general counsel role for his union clients and additionally provides training and education to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to stand up for their rights. Ralph works so closely on behalf of his clients that they become a part of his extended family. He is passionate about working to ensure their wages and benefits are secure and their environments are safe and improved.

Ralph regularly contributes his talents to shaping public policy litigation, contributing to the fight for justice and equity. In 2015, he developed the legal strategy and worked with colleagues on briefs and arguments to defeat the Philadelphia School Reform Commission (SRC) in its attempted takeover of the Philadelphia School District. The SRC claimed statutory authority to cease negotiations with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers regarding a new contract, cancel the existing contract, and impose new terms and conditions of employment. A lengthy legal battle ensued, wending its way through every level of the Pennsylvania court system. Ralph, together with the firm's deep bench, prevailed in every proceeding against an army of private firms engaged by the SRC. When the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of the firm's client, Ralph considered it a capstone of his career.

Considered by his peers as a leading authority on federal and state election law and regulation, Ralph also serves as counsel for political candidates, political action committees and related organizations in matters such as campaign finance and election law enforcement. In 2013, Ralph, together with Willig, Williams & Davidson partner, John Bielski represented the AFL-CIO and many local unions in the successful fight to overturn the voter ID law in Pennsylvania. In 2018, Ralph and John Bielski represented



the same clients in the constitutional challenge to the Pennsylvania legislature's conduct in gerrymandering the Pennsylvania Congressional districts. This litigation resulted in overturning that plan and making the districts comply with constitutional requirements.

Prior to joining Willig, Williams & Davidson, Ralph spent 16 years litigating for the City of Philadelphia, first as an assistant city solicitor and ultimately as chief deputy city solicitor. During his tenure, he was responsible for all employment-related litigation involving the city, including all facets of discrimination, hiring and promotion and labor relations issues. As chief deputy city solicitor, he also served as general counsel to the city's police department, election commission, civil service commission and pension and retirement board.

## WHAT INSPIRES ME ABOUT MY WORK

"I am inspired to do something about the political, legal and social problems that I read about in the news—unequal school funding, unfair voter ID laws, gerrymandering of Congressional seats. We helped to rectify these problems. Every day, we do something about unfair pay, unfair agreements and unfair benefits. We help people, we change lives and we make things a little better. These are good reasons to get out of bed and face the day."

## AWAY FROM WORK

"I love to travel and pursue an active and healthy lifestyle. I recently returned from two wonderful weeks exploring Peru."

## Practice Areas

- Negotiation / Executive Contracts / Noncompete Agreements / Severance
- Class and Collective Actions
- Union Trusteeships
- Collective Bargaining and Negotiations
- Department of Labor Investigations and Compliance
- Discrimination
- Election and Campaign Finance
- Employment Law
- Grievance and Interest Arbitration
- Labor Law – Unions



- Political and Legislative Action
- Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)
- Retaliation / Free Speech / Whistle Blowing / Wrongful Termination
- Sexual Harassment
- Union Elections
- Union Officer Training and Education
- Union Rights – NLRB and PLRB Proceedings

## **Education**

- Temple University, James E. Beasley School of Law (J.D. , 1975)
- LaSalle College (B.A. , 1970)

## **Honors and Awards**

- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2006 – present
- Pennsylvania Super Lawyers (Thomson Reuters), 2004 – present
- The Legal Intelligencer Professional Excellence Award, Unsung Hero, 2021
- Pennsylvania Lawyer of the Year – Labor Law, *The Best Lawyers in America*, 2017
- Inducted as a Fellow of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers, 2015
- Recipient of the City of Hope Spirit of Life Award, 2010

## **Associations**

- Fellow, College of Labor and Employment Lawyers, since 2015
- Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Hearing Committee, 1989 to 1994
- Philadelphia Bar Association, 1976 to Present, City Policy Committee Chair, 1992
- Philadelphia Board of Pensions and Retirement, 1987 to 1991