

News from Willig, Williams & Davidson

Big Boss – Not Just Big Brother – May be Watching You

Just when you thought only the National Security Agency was monitoring your email and cell phone calls, be aware that your employer may be doing that and more. Employers are being heavily marketed by software companies trying to sell mobile surveillance applications that run on smartphones and tablets.

One vendor advertises that their tablet and cell phone spyware is "100% invisible and undetectable." This "app" allows your employer to read your emails and text messages, see who you called, track your location, and monitor most any activity on the mobile device. So right now, your employer may be getting regular activity reports on most everything you do on the mobile device that was provided to you as part of your job. [Read more about employer surveillance...](#)

The Taft-Hartley Act on Paying Union Officials Challenged in 2013

The Taft-Hartley Act, at 29 U.S.C. § 186, makes it a crime for an employer that is under contract with a private sector union, or an organization target of such a union, to pay to the union or a union official any "money or other thing of value," unless certain exceptions apply.

From time to time, employers or others have sought to invalidate certain negotiated arrangements with unions as constituting "things of value" given to a union outside of the statute's exceptions. 2013 was a banner year for such challenges, with two important decisions being handed down. [Read more about Taft-Hartley Act challenges...](#)

Bankruptcy Ruling Puts Union Pensions at Risk

A recent bankruptcy decision involving the City of Detroit places at risk the pension rights of both retired and active municipal employees. After extensive briefing on a host of legal issues, a federal bankruptcy judge found that the city was eligible for municipal bankruptcy protection under Chapter 9 of the Bankruptcy Code—the section permitting municipalities to file for bankruptcy protection. In reaching its conclusion, the bankruptcy court made clear that its ruling could result in a reduction in pension benefits when the city presents and the court approves a reorganization plan. Thus, Detroit's municipal employees may see the loss of hard-won pension and other health and welfare rights. [Read more about city bankruptcy implications...](#)



Congress Ends Federal Unemployment Benefits, Debates New Extension

Special Announcement: Stuart Davidson Appointed to International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans Committee



Willig, Williams & Davidson is pleased to announce that Partner **Stuart W. Davidson**, has been appointed to the Professionals Committee of the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBP) effective Jan. 1, 2014. Davidson is one of six attorneys to serve on the 16-member committee.

The IFEBP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to being a leading objective and independent global source of education and information about employee benefits, compensation and financial literacy. Based on nominations received, the Executive Committee selected Davidson to serve as a member of the Professionals Committee for a one-year term. [Read more about Davidson's appointment to the IFEBP...](#)

Attorney Happenings and Headlines

Willig, Williams & Davidson attorneys are very active in the community and often serve on boards, speak at industry events, and make news headlines. Here are some of the firm's latest goings on:

Kristine Phillips Appointed Co-Chair of Philadelphia Bar Association Municipal

In December 2013, the U.S. Congress reached a budget deal that ended a longstanding extension of federally funded unemployment benefits beyond 2013. As a result, the last payable week of extended federal benefits in Pennsylvania was the compensable week ending Dec. 28, 2013. That leaves more than 1 million Americans with no income.

However, we advise Pennsylvanians who were collecting unemployment benefits as of Dec. 28, 2013, to continue to file for benefits. [Read more about federal unemployment benefits...](#)

Attorney Insights – Willig, Williams & Davidson Attorney Alaine Williams Discusses Public Employee Labor Law



Pennsylvania labor and employment lawyer and firm Partner **Alaine Williams** discusses the firm's experience with public employee labor law. Protecting the jobs, wages and benefits of public employees is a vital economic issue for all of us, Williams says. [Click here to watch the full video...](#)

Featured Practice Area: Public Employee Labor Law

Public sector employees face mounting pressure from privatization movements in the workplace. Local, state and national governmental bodies and school administrations across the country are investigating outsourcing, which can result in the loss of jobs, benefits and seniority for public workers.

The lawyers at Willig, Williams & Davidson are passionate about the rights of workers and the need for a vibrant union to protect those workers. A thriving middle class that works for a living wage and receives benefits from their employer is essential to the health of the nation's economy. [Read more about the firm's labor law union representation here...](#)

Workers' Compensation Q&A – Did You Know?

Our firm often answers questions about workers' compensation. Here are some of the most frequently asked:

- **What benefits are available if I suffer an amputation or a permanent loss of use of a body part?**
- **Am I entitled to any benefits if I suffer a disfigurement as a result of a work injury or disease?**
- **What medical benefits are available?**
- **What happens if my claim is accepted?**

Court Committee

Partner **Kristine A. Phillips** has been appointed as a co-chair of the **Municipal Court Committee of the Philadelphia Bar Association** for 2014. The committee assists the bench and bar of the Municipal Court of Philadelphia in achieving and maintaining a just, efficient, speedy and easily accessible court system.

Alaine Williams Attends Distribution of Back-Pay to Former Hospital Employees

Partner **Alaine Williams** was quoted in the **Republican Herald** while attending an AFSCME Union presentation distributing salary compensation to former employees of Saint Catherine Medical Center after the hospital unlawfully closed.

John Bielski Quoted on Northumberland County Employee Arbitration

John R. Bielski, firm Partner and attorney for the AFSCME District Council 86, was quoted by **NewsItem.com** after a Northumberland County judge ruled to deny a petition to modify an arbitration and reinstate a fired county employee with back pay and seniority.

Citizen's Voice Quotes Ralph Teti on Luzerne County's Independent Party-Line Vote

Ralph J. Teti, who served as general counsel to Philadelphia's election commission, said he doesn't believe voters should have a **straight-party option for independent candidates** because they don't represent parties.

PCN TV Interviews Irwin Aronson on Federally Protected Conduct in Labor Disputes

Partner **Irwin W. Aronson** was a speaker on the PCN Call-In Show along with the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry to discuss **labor and employment legislation HB 1154** and criminalizing federally protected conduct in a labor dispute.

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Willig, Williams & Davidson is one of the largest and most respected union-side labor law firms in the United States with offices in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Jenkintown and Media, Pa., as well as Haddonfield, N.J. The firm's accomplished and diverse legal team focuses on representing labor unions, employee benefit funds and individual working people and their families. Its attorneys work with clients to find practical and efficient solutions to the problems that they face in a variety of legal forums, including national, regional and local contract negotiations and dispute resolution through mediation, arbitration and court litigation. The materials contained in this correspondence have been authored or gathered by Willig, Williams & Davidson for informational purposes only. This correspondence is not intended to be and is not considered to be legal advice. Transmission of this document is not intended to create, and receipt does not establish, an attorney-client relationship. Legal advice of any nature should be sought from legal counsel. In some states, this correspondence may be considered attorney advertising.

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