

The COVID-19 Impact on the Legal Practice Area Landscape

COVID-19 brought a lot of uncertainty to the legal industry, including what effect the pandemic will have on various practice areas. While legal experts warn that some practice areas will likely experience diminished activity, they also predict that others will flourish from the numerous legal issues of COVID-19.

This post will take a look at some common legal practice areas and how they may be affected during and after the coronavirus pandemic.

Corporate and Business Law

While corporate lawyers may see less work in the areas of mergers and acquisitions, they will likely see more matters related to restructuring, litigation, and insolvency. Many companies, big and small, will take a financial hit from the pandemic, leaving business leaders looking for ways to stay afloat and cut their losses. They need corporate lawyers to help them make these decisions and handle the legal processes involved.

Corporate law firms may also see clients attempting to negotiate cheaper rates, as they seek to cut their costs. The economic downturn brought on by COVID-10 has business leaders tightening their belts and legal expenses often become one of the first costs minimized.

Firms that offer alternative billing arrangements, like fixed fees, may be able to weather this challenge and even grow from it. Now more than ever, corporate clients want to know how every penny will be spent. Fixed fee arrangements provide them with the comfort of knowing exactly how much legal representation will cost upfront, without any surprises down the line.

Bankruptcy

As evidenced by past economic downturns, bankruptcy law is likely to flourish in the wake of COVID-19. The financial crisis will take its toll on businesses and individuals, forcing many people to seek protection through bankruptcy. Lawyers in this practice area may find themselves swamped with requests from debtors seeking financial protection and creditors seeking to collect on debts owed.

In addition, as creditors, mortgage companies, and landlords provide financial aid and grace periods during these unprecedented times, it will bring up entirely new questions about bankruptcy and the ability of debtors to avoid these debts. Bankruptcy attorneys will be called on to answer these questions and help these companies avoid future losses.

Health Law

Health law is a diverse practice area encompassing everything from transactional and regulatory matters to compliance and personal injury litigation. In the age of COVID, as many medical providers find themselves ill-equipped to handle the influx of patients, and patients find themselves unable to get adequate medical care, it is quite possible that health law attorneys will see an uptick in the number of personal injury claims coming through the door.

Other attorneys in this industry may find themselves embroiled in internal investigations as regulatory boards try to figure out and address the inadequacies that have been revealed during the pandemic. The emergence of digital health as a preferred method of care may also affect the health law practice area, as industry leaders seek guidance about privacy issues and accessibility.

Labor & Employment

With businesses facing extraordinary challenges from COVID-19, employment law has emerged as a widespread legal concern. Business leaders want guidance about their duties and responsibilities. Employees want guidance about their rights and what to expect from their employers.

Employers and employees will hire labor lawyers for matters regarding:

- Enforcement of employee attendance
- Employee discipline and separation from work
- Workplace hazards
- Workers compensation
- Sick leave and pay
- Privacy issues
- Discrimination

Employment law is fast emerging as a hot practice area in response to COVID-19. This unforeseen crisis has resulted in a flood of questions from employers and employees alike. As individuals and businesses seek to navigate this new normal, they will turn to employment attorneys for trusted guidance.

Privacy and Data Security

Attorneys working in this area provide business leaders with guidance about issues related to cybersecurity, including internal security protocols, cyber-attacks, and the protection of personal data. Privacy and data security have become especially important in the age of COVID-19 where more companies than ever are operating in a virtual work environment. As the pandemic progresses, data security law firms may find themselves dealing with increased numbers of security breaches and requests for assistance with regulatory compliance.

Insurance Law

With a focus on insurance coverage, insurance defense litigation, and insurance compliance, insurance lawyers are likely to see an uptick in work resulting from COVID-19. As insured individuals seek to recover under their policies, insurance lawyers will be called on to determine the insured's policy covers the loss or liability.

Some common issues involved in insurance law include:

- Catastrophic loss
- Bad faith claims
- Disability coverage
- Insurance fraud

History has shown an increase in insurance cases during times of national crisis. Right now, many states are enacting new legislation that could have a significant effect on the insurance industry, so insurance compliance is an ongoing aspect of this practice area that will not go away under the pandemic. As insurance companies work to remain in compliance with these state and federal laws, they will need legal guidance from insurance law firms.

While insurance companies generally employ in-house attorneys to analyze coverage issues and handle legal matters, many also consult with insurance law firms as outside counsel for help with more complex litigation matters.

Immigration Law

Sweeping changes to US immigration policies may lead to an influx of immigration cases following COVID-19. For example, an executive order froze most green card applications for 60 days. Once this restriction is lifted, immigration attorneys may experience more inquiries for representation. Temporary rule changes for foreign workers and their employers may also result in more immigration cases.

COVID-19 will Affect Legal Practice Areas

The legal industry cannot escape the uncertainty of COVID-19. As the pandemic continues, lawyers will see some practice areas fade while others have the potential for exponential growth.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, Personal Touch Edits, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.