

Littler and Canine Companions for Independence Announce Strategic Partnership

Employment and labor law Littler and Canine Companions for Independence, a non-profit organization that provides highly trained assistance dogs to people with disabilities at no charge, announced the formation of a strategic partnership.

Accommodating requests from employees and customers to bring service animals into their workplaces or facilities has become increasingly complex for companies, the firm said in a release. The issue is intensified by the rise in instances of people using fake vests to pass family pets off as service animals, which undermines the acceptance of legitimate service dogs and creates headaches for companies. As part of this partnership, Littler and Canine Companions will work together to address this issue and provide guidance for companies on managing service animal accommodation requests in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

“Canine Companions is a very worthwhile organization and we look forward to working together to educate companies on the myriad issues surrounding service animal accommodation, while further raising awareness of the vital services Canine Companions provides in matching individuals with disabilities with assistance dogs,” said Tom Bender and Jeremy Roth, co-managing directors of Littler, in a joint statement.

“We have worked closely with Littler during the past year to raise awareness of the proper use of service dogs in the workplace and business facilities, and are excited to embark on this formal partnership,” said Canine Companions Chief Development Officer Barbara Barrow. “Littler’s depth of experience in the legal aspects of service-animal

accommodation, as well as its commitment to expanding the availability of assistance dogs for people with disabilities, make the firm a perfect partner. We look forward to combining our resources to continue to provide support to people with disabilities and help prevent service-dog fraud.”

In their work together to date, Littler and Canine Companions hosted a breakfast briefing in San Francisco in October 2017 on employment and public accommodation requirements for service animals. Canine Companions was also featured at Littler’s 35th annual Executive Employer Conference in May 2018, including an interview from the conference floor on employee requests to bring service animals into the workplace. As part of its formal partnership, Littler and Canine Companions will be hosting a series of educational events in the coming months, including:

- Littler Breakfast Briefing in Washington, D.C., September 5, 2018
- Littler Breakfast Briefing in Philadelphia, September 6, 2018
- Littler Regional Employer Conference in Las Vegas, September 12, 2018
- Littler Regional Employer Conference in Reno, Nevada, September 13, 2018
- California State Council of SHRM in Redding, California, September 26, 2018
- California State Council of SHRM in Monterey, California, November 15, 2018

Peter Petesch, a shareholder in Littler’s Washington, D.C., office who regularly advises clients on service animal accommodations in the workplace, added: “As we continue to see an uptick in questions related to service animals from our clients, this partnership with Canine Companions will be beneficial in helping companies ensure a safe and sensible environment for employees and customers in accommodating these requests.”

