



# THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS COUNSEL

is pleased to announce the

## TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL

### EMPLOYEE BENEFITS WRITING COMPETITION AWARDS

---

**SUBJECT:** Any topic in the field of employee benefits law.

**OPEN TO:** Any J.D. and graduate (L.L.M. or S.J.D.) law students enrolled at any time between August 15, 2025, and August 15, 2026, who have not at any time engaged in the practice of law.

**SUBMIT BY:** June 1, 2026

<b>UP TO TWO AWARDS:</b>	Sidney M. Perlstadt Memorial Award	\$2,500
	Brian J. Dougherty Memorial Award	\$2,500

Winners will be honored during the College's annual black-tie dinner on October 10, 2026, in San Diego, California. The winning papers will also be distributed to the Fellows of the American College of Employee Benefits Counsel, comprised of experienced attorneys who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the employee benefits field in a wide range of practice settings including law and consulting firms, universities, labor unions, advocacy organizations, and government agencies throughout the United States. The College will also use its best efforts to have one or more of the winning papers published in a professional or scholarly publication, if deemed suitable by the College's Writing Competition Committee and the editors of the publication.

For information concerning the American College of Employee Benefits Counsel or the writing competition for law school students, contact Frances King Quick at [fquick@maynardnexsen.com](mailto:fquick@maynardnexsen.com) (with a copy to [ssteward@maynardnexsen.com](mailto:ssteward@maynardnexsen.com)) or consult the website at [www.acebc.com](http://www.acebc.com).

**[Writing Competition Rules Attached]**



# THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS COUNSEL

## Employee Benefits Writing Competition Rules

1. **Eligibility/Topics.** Except as provided in item 6. below, applicants must be enrolled full-time or part-time in a law school located within the borders of a U.S. state or territory (Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands) between August 15, 2025, and August 15, 2026, seeking a J.D. or a graduate law degree (e.g., L.L.M. or S.J.D.) and not at any time admitted to the practice of law in any U.S. or foreign jurisdiction. Papers must deal with specific employee benefits legal topics. As illustrative examples, a paper might address legal issues involving health or other welfare benefits, pensions, 401(k) plans, severance, executive compensation, benefit claims and/or appeals, current or former spouses' or domestic partners' benefits, collectively bargained benefits, employee benefits in bankruptcy, ERISA litigation, fiduciary obligations, or the tax treatment of benefits/contributions.
  - a. Papers should not exceed 40 pages (double-spaced, in 12-point type, with a one-inch margin on each side), including footnotes, and must be written in the English language.
  - b. Papers must be submitted as email attachments to [fquick@maynardnexsen.com](mailto:fquick@maynardnexsen.com) with a copy to [sstewart@maynardnexsen.com](mailto:sstewart@maynardnexsen.com) and should be submitted as Word or PDF documents. No information identifying the author or law school should be included in the text, the footnotes, or the filename of the paper. That identifying information, along with an address, a telephone number, and law school enrollment status, should be provided in the cover email message.
  - c. Submissions may include papers prepared for class assignments, law journals or other purposes, as well as those written specifically for this writing competition, which are exclusively the work of the individual submitting student.
  - d. Student papers submitted for publication in law reviews or journals or other legal periodicals but not yet published are eligible for the writing competition awards, provided that (i) the version submitted for this writing competition does not reflect any changes made to the paper after submission of the manuscript to any publication, and (ii) the College receives any consents necessary to publish or republish the paper.
  - e. The deadline to submit papers for consideration in the writing competition is June 1, 2026 (“**the Deadline**”).
2. **Selection of Winners.** Eligible papers submitted by the Deadline will be reviewed by a group of initial reviewing Fellows. Winning papers are then selected by the Writing Competition Committee (“**Committee**”) based on the factors they deem relevant. The reviewers and the Committee will consider: (i) depth and creativity of legal analysis; (ii)

thoroughness of legal research; (iii) organization and writing style; (iv) difficulty of subject matter; (v) consideration of employee benefits policy implications; and (vi) overall impression. No single factor is controlling. A focused, in-depth analysis of a discrete topic generally is considered more favorably than a broad survey piece. Presentation (e.g., organization, proofreading, proper grammar) also carries substantial weight. The Committee may decline to consider a poorly organized paper or one laden with grammatical errors for those reasons alone. Once the Committee has made its selection of the winning papers, a rigorous check of the citations in the winning papers is conducted. If the cite check does not result in a paper being disqualified, the Committee will recommend the winning papers to the College's Board of Governors. The Board of Governor's decision on the winning papers is final. It is anticipated that award winners will be notified by August 21, 2026.

3. **Publication of Winning Papers.** The College will use its best efforts to arrange for publication of the winning papers in a professional or scholarly publication, if deemed suitable by the Committee and the publication's editors. The following Wolters Kluwer publications, which are edited by Fellow Bruce J. McNeil, have agreed to publish winning papers with content suitable to the publication: the *Journal of Pension Planning and Compliance*, and the *Journal of Deferred Compensation: Nonqualified Plans and Executive Compensation*. In addition, the winning papers will be posted on the College's website and offered for publication in a benefits newsletter of general circulation in the employee benefits legal community. The author of the paper must consent to its publication.
4. **Awards.** There are cash awards for two winning papers: the Sidney M. Perlstadt Memorial Award and the Brian J. Dougherty Memorial Award. The College, however, may decide, in its discretion, to split an award, to make additional awards, or to award fewer than two awards. Award winners will be guests of the College during its annual black-tie dinner to be held on October 10, 2026, in San Diego. The College covers the travel and lodging expenses for the award recipients as well as that of one guest each.
5. **Deadline.** Papers must be submitted in the manner described in paragraph 1(b) above and must be received no later than Midnight in the submitting student's time zone on the Deadline.
6. **Disclaimer.** The College disclaims responsibility for any failure to give due consideration to any submission due to any email or other electronic transmission, storage, or archival errors, regardless of the cause. The Committee may, however, waive the eligibility requirements applicable to any student whose submitted paper was not afforded due consideration on account of such an error in a prior year's competition.

Questions concerning the law student writing competition should be directed to Frances King Quick, Co-Chair of the ACEBC® Writing Competition Committee, at [fquick@maynardnexsen.com](mailto:fquick@maynardnexsen.com) with a copy to [sstewart@maynardnexsen.com](mailto:sstewart@maynardnexsen.com).