



Sarah E. Messersmith
Of Counsel

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Sarah is a Hampton native and a member of the Estate, Trust & Wealth Transfer Group in the Newport News office of Kaufman & Canoles. Sarah is passionate about her estate practice and working with clients to help them achieve their goals. Her estate planning and administration work with clients ranges from the initial structuring and implementation of their estate plans to the resulting estate and trust administration. Sarah helps clients create wills, revocable and irrevocable trusts, powers of attorney and advance medical directives and assists clients with tax planning and succession planning issues. She also represents clients who are administering an estate or trust after a family member has died, providing assistance through the trust implementation or probate process. Sarah has background in real estate and corporate work, and frequently represents clients who have real estate holdings and ownership of small businesses. Sarah also serves as a Commissioner of Accounts for the City of Hampton, which entails the review and audit of filings made by fiduciaries for estates, trusts, guardianships, conservatorships, and foreclosures.

PRACTICE AREAS

- Estate, Trust & Wealth Transfer

REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

- Represented estates involving substantial assets, multiple beneficiaries, issues about advancement of inheritance and complex accounting reports to the Commissioner of Accounts
- Represented clients with complex tax and estate planning needs, including preparation of and funding revocable living trusts, and preparation of trusts to provide for children upon the death of both parents
- Represented estates with substantial real estate holdings, many with other owners, requiring strategizing as to disposition, including sale, exchange and/or distribution to beneficiaries
- Represented estates with ongoing business operations and preparation of associated corporate and company documents necessary to transfer ownership of entities

RECOGNITION AND HONORS

- *Best Lawyers in America*, 2024-2025
- Top Lawyers; *CoVaBIZ Magazine*, 2019-2022
- Virginia Super Lawyers Rising Stars; Estate Planning and Probate, 2017-2019
- LEAD Peninsula, Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Class of 2016
- Junior League of Hampton Roads Liz Jones Community Commitment Award, 2014
- Articles Editor; *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law*, 2004-2005

ASSOCIATIONS

- Commissioner of Accounts; 8th Judicial Circuit, Virginia, 2020 - Present
- Virginia Conference of Commissioner of Accounts

ASSOCIATIONS (CONT.)

- Virginia Living Museum, Board of Trustees, 2018 – Present
 - President, 2024 – Present
 - President Elect, 2022 – 2024
 - Secretary, 2020 – 2022
- Peninsula SPCA, Director Emeritus
 - Board of Directors, 2013 – 2023
 - President, 2020 – 2021
 - First Vice President, 2016 – 2019
 - Chair Fur Ball Committee, 2014 – 2016
- Hampton Public Library Foundation, Board of Directors, 2016 – 2021
 - President, 2019 – 2021
 - Secretary/Treasurer, 2016 – 2018
- Hampton Bar Association, 2005 – Present
- Virginia Bar Association, 2005 – Present
 - Young Lawyers Division Executive Council, 2006 – 2014
- Newport News Bar Association, 2012 – Present
- Peninsula Estate Planning Council, 2011 – Present
- Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Board of Directors, 2019 – 2021
- Junior League of Hampton Roads, 2010 – 2014
 - Publications Committee, 2011 – 2013
 - Craft Beer Festival Committee, 2013 – 2014
 - Liz Jones Community Commitment Award, 2014
- Sarah Bonwell Hudgins Foundation, Board of Trustees, 2008 – 2017
 - President, 2014 – 2017
 - First Vice President, 2011 – 2014
 - Associate Treasurer, 2010 – 2011

ADMISSIONS

- Virginia

EDUCATION

- College of William and Mary; B.S., *summa cum laude*, 2002
- College of William and Mary Law School; J.D., 2005

PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

- 55 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named *Best Lawyers in America*© 2025, 7 Named “Lawyer of the Year,” and 13 Named “Ones to Watch”
- 54 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named *Best Lawyers in America*© 2024, 6 Named “Lawyer of the Year,” and 10 Named “Ones to Watch”
- 40 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Top Lawyers 2022 in *CoVaBIZ Magazine*
- 40 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Top Lawyers 2021 in *CoVaBIZ Magazine*
- 45 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Top Lawyers 2020 in *CoVaBIZ Magazine*
- 18 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Super Lawyers 2019 and 6 Named as Rising Stars 2019
- 40 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Top Lawyers 2019 in *CoVaBIZ Magazine*
- Private Client Services Update - 2018 Virginia Legislative Update
- 31 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Super Lawyers 2018 and 5 Named as Rising Stars 2018
- 29 Kaufman & Canoles Attorneys Named as Super Lawyers 2017 and 5 Named as Rising Stars 2017
- Private Client Services Update - Length of Marriage Now a Consideration for Surviving Spouse’s Rights Under Virginia Law
- Private Client Services Update - 2014 Virginia Legislative Update - Trusts & Estates Law Changes
- Private Client Services Update - What Really is Inherited with a Limited Liability Company Interest?
- Private Client Services Update - 2013 Virginia Legislative Update - Trusts & Estates Law
- Private Client Services Update - It’s Not Set in Stone: Reciprocal Wills Do Not Automatically Create an Irrevocable Estate Plan

PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS (CONT.)

- Private Client Services Update - 2012 Virginia Legislative Update - Trusts & Estates Law
- Private Client Services Update - Use of Small Estate Affidavits to Clean Up After Probate Avoidance Trusts
- Private Client Services Update - 2011 Virginia Legislative Update - Trusts & Estates Law
- Private Client Services Update - Lifetime Funding of Revocable Trusts for Couples: Avoiding Probate While Maintaining Creditor Protection
- Private Client Services Update - The Special Opportunities for Disclaimers in 2010
- Private Client Services Update - It's For the Kids: Creation of a Children's Trust
- Private Client Services - 2009 Virginia Legislative Update