

March Madness Can Be Problematic for Employers

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March Madness is here again. The brackets, the excitement, the employment law issues! Yes, many employers find that the annual NCAA basketball tournament goes hand-in-hand with employment law because, unfortunately, one of the most exciting sporting events of the year can also be the most problematic for employers.

Unlike other major sporting events such as the Super Bowl, which takes place on a single Sunday evening, March Madness lasts for weeks and roughly half of the games are played during traditional work hours. Studies have shown a huge drop in productivity during March Madness as employees tune in to watch games, check scores or research teams for their brackets on their computers and smartphones.

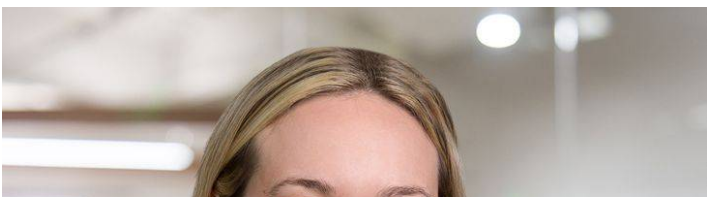
Another potential source of concern for employers is office pools. These pools often spring up with either the expressed or implied — by not shutting the pool down — consent of employers whose employees bet on the outcome of games and on the tournament's champion. Regardless of the fact that some might consider these pools to be long standing tradition, gambling unquestionably runs afoul of Florida law.

Further, employers who allow office pools could potentially be viewed as condoning the illegal behavior of their employees. Even worse, managers who actively encourage employees to join office pools could be accused of coercing others to gamble.

Companies can focus on increasing morale and camaraderie, and decreasing legal issues, by establishing an office pool with no entry fee or by placing a television in the lunch room to allow workers to catch up on scores during their break times rather than at their desks.

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