

Nicholas Ernst

Associate

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Practice

Appeals

Litigation & Dispute Resolution

Wills, Trusts & Estates

Education

University of Hawaii, William S. Richardson School of Law (J.D.)

University of Colorado, Boulder Journalism & Mass Communication (B.S.)

Nicholas Ernst is an Associate in the firm's Appeals, Litigation & Dispute Resolution, and Wills, Trusts & Estates practice groups. He earned his law degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, William S. Richardson School of Law where he studied in the Evening Part Time program for students working full time. Nick arrived at the firm with more than a decade of experience in education and a passion for public speaking and debate.

Nick has once again been named to the 2026 Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America list in the practice areas of Appellate, Commercial Litigation and Trusts & Estates.

While in law school, Nick was a member and captain of the Native American Moot Court Team, a teaching assistant for Contracts I & Contracts II, and a member of Phi Delta Phi, an international legal honor society. In 2018, he and his partner were awarded first place for their written brief in the National Native American Law Students Association Moot Court Competition. He and his partners were also semifinalists in the 2018 and 2020 moot court competitions. He also earned a certificate from the Ka Huli Ao Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law.

Nick was a summer associate at Damon Key in 2019, assisting with various legal tasks. Prior to that, he held an externship with Judge Rhonda Nishimura of the First Circuit Court, where he wrote briefs for motions and hearings in personal and commercial civil actions. He also held an externship with a Honolulu law firm, gaining further research experience.

In January 2007, Nick joined the teaching staff of Kamehameha Schools, his high school alma mater. He was a teacher in the school's Speech Department, teaching Honors Value Debate, Electronic Media and Communication Technology, Honors Interpretation and Public Speaking, and other communication-related courses. Nick is credited with introducing a new broadcast journalism course focused on video and radio broadcasting. He continued to teach full time at Kamehameha Schools while pursuing his law degree and until joining the firm as an Associate.

According to Nick, he remains very passionate about education – particularly for Native Hawaiian children. However, over time, he became attracted to the idea of becoming an attorney because of the opportunities it would provide to make someone's life a little easier. "I wanted to serve my community with their legal needs because there is probably nothing more

intimidating, confusing and challenging as the law,” said Nick. “I wanted to be able to provide the relief one feels knowing that they have an advocate fighting on their behalf.”

Nick remains a volunteer speech and debate coach for Kamehameha Schools. He is also active with the Hawaii Speech League (HSL), an organization dedicated to speech activities for public and private school students across the state. He introduced Congressional Debate to the HSL, a type of competition that has students emulate members of the U.S. Congress by debating bills and resolutions which they prepare in advance.

Nick holds a B.S. in Journalism & Mass Communication from the University of Colorado, Boulder. While there, he became a co-E Emmy award winner (2006 Student Division), for the documentary Destination Pluto and Beyond. He was born in Pampanga, Philippines, and raised in Kailua, where he resides today. Beyond coaching speech and debate, Nick also enjoys watching movies, reading, playing with his dog and enjoying all types of food.

Professional and Community Affiliation

- American Bar Association
 - State and Local Government Law Section
 - Litigation Section
 - Young Lawyers Division
- Hawaii State Bar Association
 - Appellate Section
 - Collection Law Section
 - Litigation Section
 - Access to Justice Room (Honolulu District Court), Volunteer
- Hawaiian Filipino Lawyers Association
- Native Hawaiian Bar Association

Bar Admissions

- State of Hawaii
- U.S. District Court (District of Hawaii)

