



Heather R. James

Partner

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Heather James is a partner in the Municipal Finance Group and serves as bond counsel for municipal governments, helping simplify complex financings and compliance matters.

Her experience spans general obligation bonds, utility financings, tax increment and economic development projects, letters of credit, and both taxable and tax-exempt financings for state and local governments and local industry. She guides municipalities in planning and implementing financings for diverse projects, with a particular emphasis on economic development. Additionally, Heather advises on municipal law, government contracts, securities regulations, leasing, and federal tax compliance.

Over the several fruitful years she has spent at Ice Miller, Heather has built strong relationships across cities, towns, and counties throughout Indiana. Known for her responsiveness, efficiency, and collaborative approach, she delivers high-quality service to every client.

Heather earned her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, with high distinction, from Indiana University in 2005. Two years later, she earned her accelerated juris doctor, *cum laude*, from Valparaiso University School of Law. While there, Heather served as a member of the *Valparaiso University Law Review*, worked as a legal writing teaching assistant, and also completed a summer study abroad program at Cambridge, England. In addition, Heather gained practical experience as an extern for the Honorable Judge Vaidik of the Indiana Court of Appeals and as a law clerk for Judge Jeffrey Dywan and Judge Julie Cantrell of the Lake County Superior Court, as well as Magistrate Michael Pagano of the Lake County Small Claims Court.

On a personal note, Heather lives in downtown Indianapolis with her husband, Sebastian Smelko, their two daughters, and their Newfoundland, Dr. Leo Marvin (Marv).

Education

- Indiana University (B.S., 2005)
 - Criminal Justice

Services & Industries

- Economic Development
- Public Finance
- State & Local Government

- Valparaiso University School of Law (J.D., 2007)

Admissions

- Indiana

Professional Affiliations

- Ice Miller Board of Directors

Awards & Honors

- Chambers USA America's Leading Lawyers for Public Finance, 2026
- *The Best Lawyers® in America*, Public Finance Law and Municipal Law, 2022-2026

Community Involvement

- Member of the Board of Directors, Accelerating Indiana Municipalities (AIM), December 2011
- Member to the Board, Indiana Women in Public Finance, March 2011
- President, Indiana Women in Public Finance, 2013
- Member, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group, Appointed by the Office of the Governor, 2007 - March 2011

Published In

- 42 *Val. U. L. Rev.* 629, 2008

Thought Leadership

March 25, 2020

Four Things You Can Do to Mitigate Delays in Property Tax Payments

January 17, 2020

Preparing Cybersecurity for Bond Ratings

Speaking Engagements

- Panelist, "Residential Tax Increment Finance," 2022 Indiana Conference of Mayors, August 11, 2022