



Melanie Fridgant

Associate

Houston
+1.713.815.7353

Melanie.Fridgant@klgates.com

OVERVIEW

Melanie Fridgant is an associate and a member of the Energy Assets and Transactions practice group. She advises clients in the maritime and energy industries on a broad range of strategic transactions. Her practice includes commercial transactions, financings, project development, and regulatory matters, with a particular focus on compliance with the Jones Act and the American Fisheries Act.

Drawing on her experience in Finance, Regulatory Compliance, and Commercial Transactions, Melanie provides practical, comprehensive counsel that addresses both the immediate demands of a transaction and the broader strategic objectives of her clients' businesses.

Having lived in Europe, the United Kingdom, the Middle East, and the United States, Melanie brings a global perspective to her practice. She regularly represents US-based and international clients and is competent at navigating cross-border matters spanning across multiple time zones.

Her clients are US and foreign commercial and fishing vessel owners and operators, shipping and logistics companies, marine services companies, cruise lines, international and national drilling companies, international oil and gas companies, oil and gas marketers.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Melanie began her career with the firm as a legal intern in 2017. Prior to rejoining, she was an associate in the maritime litigation, arbitration, and dispute resolution group at national and international law firms, where she worked on transactional matters, as well as commercial disputes and arbitrations in the maritime, energy, and construction sectors. Her experience includes representing an international energy services company in arbitration proceedings under the London Maritime Arbitrators Association (LMAA) Rules and the Houston Maritime Arbitrators Association (HMAA) Rules.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Recognized by *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America* for Transportation Law in Houston, TX, 2024-2027

PROFESSIONAL / CIVIC ACTIVITIES

- Leadership Class, Institute for Energy Law, 2026-2027
- Women International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA)
- Houston Maritime Arbitration Association
 - Membership Director

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- The Jones Act: What Maritime Operators Need to Know, WIMOs Webinar, October 2026
- US Offshore Wind Market and Regulatory Update, April 2022

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Commercial Transactions

Melanie advises vessel owners and operators, energy and marine services companies, shipyards, and other industry participants on a broad range of maritime and energy-related commercial transactions. Her experience includes drafting and negotiating key industry agreements such as voyage, time, and bareboat charterparties, tug services agreements, contracts of affreightment, bills of lading, marine services consulting agreements, drilling contracts, supply agreements, power purchase agreements, EPC agreements, and master services and support agreements for onshore and offshore infrastructure projects. She also advises on complex commercial transactions, including corporate structuring, joint ventures, entity dissolutions, vessel construction agreements, and vessel purchase and sale transactions.

Financing Transactions

Melanie has significant experience in ship finance and related transactions. She represents both US and foreign investors and owners in companies owning, investing in, selling, or financing Jones Act or non-Jones Act qualified vessels as well as fishing vessels with a focus on compliance with coastwise trade laws and the American Fisheries Act. She also represents lenders, including US banks and other institutional lenders, US-based and foreign borrowers, in secured and unsecured financing and lease financing transactions involving commercial and fishing vessels and other marine and energy assets. She also has experience with government-backed financing programs, including Title XI financing. In connection with these transactions, Melanie drafts and negotiates purchase and sale agreements, credit agreements, loan agreements, revolving credit facilities, ship mortgages, security agreements. Her maritime finance experience includes transactions ranging from less than \$US1 million to transactions exceeding \$US600 million.

Regulatory

Melanie advises clients on US and international maritime regulatory matters, including issues involving the US Coast Guard (USCG), US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the US Maritime Administration (MARAD), and the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA). She counsels clients on compliance with the Jones Act,

coastwise trade requirements, the American Fisheries Act (AFA), Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) regulations, and trade matters, including those involving the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR), export controls, and US, UK, and EU sanctions regimes. She also advises clients on compliance with FuelEU requirements and on vessel registration and deregistration in multiple jurisdictions, including the United States, Malta, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

EDUCATION

- J.D., University of Houston Law Center, 2018 (*Order of the Barristers*)
- M.A., SOAS, University of London, 2014
- B.S., Northwestern University, 2012

ADMISSIONS

- Bar of Texas
- Solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales
- United States Court of International Trade
- United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas
- United States District Court for the Western District of Texas

LANGUAGES

- English
- French
- Romanian

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP *POWERED BY HUB*

- 9 October 2025, The Essential Guide to the Jones Act

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- [Technological Developments in the Healthcare Industry: Shaping the Patient-Physician Relationship](#), Hous. J. Health & Pol'y 1, 235, 2018

NEWS & EVENTS

- 21 August 2025, More Than 350 K&L Gates Lawyers Recognized Among 2026 Best Lawyers in America, Ones to Watch

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Energy Assets and Transactions
- Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Maritime Regulatory
- Maritime Transactions and Finance

INDUSTRIES

- Energy
- Maritime
- Offshore Construction
- Offshore Wind Energy
- Transportation and Logistics