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Ms. Merrigan received her Bachelor of Arts from California State University Fresno in 2003 and her Juris Doctorate degree magna cum laude from the University of San Francisco in 2007. During law school, she was a member of the McAuliffe Honor Society and was awarded the Arthur C. Zief, Jr., scholarship. She served as a Senior Literary Editor of the University of San Francisco Maritime Law Journal. She competed in the national Judge John R. Brown Admiralty Moot Court Competition in 2006 and 2007, where she won the award for second best oral argument overall in 2007. In 2006, she served as a judicial extern to Justice Joyce Kennard of the California Supreme Court.

Ms. Merrigan began her legal career representing employers and carriers, primarily in claims brought under the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act and its extensions. She has also handled various other legal issues in admiralty and maritime law, including both injury and cargo loss claims. Ms. Merrigan launched her solo career in 2015, and her practice now focuses on appellate and other post-hearing work on behalf of plaintiffs and claimants.