

# Top Women of law

Honoring the women  
making a difference in  
the legal community

## 2012 HONOREES

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# Lindy L. Aldrich

**Deputy Director, Victim Rights Law Center, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

As deputy director of the Victim Rights Law Center, Lindy L. Aldrich has a hand in almost every aspect of the center's operations: handling cases, training attorneys, implementing grant programs, working on policy and collaborating with other organizations. "I'm one of the few who actually gets to do it all," says Aldrich, who came on board in 2007 as a staff attorney.

The center takes a 360-degree approach to helping victims in all areas of their lives that can be affected by rape or sexual assault: safety, employment, education, immigration, privacy, finances, criminal justice and housing. "We try very hard to provide as many solutions as we can," Aldrich says.

The pervasiveness of sexual assault and the extended trauma many victims experience in its aftermath give Aldrich a deep passion for her work.

"Working here has become not only my job, but something I've become so passionate about," she says. "I often say that you don't choose to work in sexual violence; unfortunately, I think sexual violence chooses you and when you see how tremendous the need is, it's almost impossible to turn your back on it."

The cases that stick with her the most, she says, are those involving young victims; 40 percent of the center's clients are between the ages of 12 and 24. Victories in the courtroom can be hard to come by, Aldrich says, but it is gratifying to see her young clients achieve a goal like graduating from high school after their ordeals.

"If they dropped out or they took a differ-

ent path, I feel like the sexual assault has won. The crime continues to control them rather than the other way around," she says.

Without the center's assistance, Aldrich fears many victims would remain silent, at the mercy of court, employment and educational systems that can be unsympathetic to their needs.

"What we do is take someone who's been traumatized and who, frankly, is not necessarily in a position to fight for themselves and we go in there at their crucial time when they need help more than ever," she says. "We try to help them stabilize and get back to some sense of normalcy."

A significant part of Aldrich's job is training pro bono volunteers. The center has more than 400 lawyers throughout Massachusetts who help between 400 and 500 clients each year. With just five attorneys on staff, pro bono support is critical. She also trains attorneys throughout the country and educates universities about their response to sexual assault under Title IX.

Before Aldrich became an attorney, she spent 10 years in advertising, but decided she wanted to leave corporate work for something more fulfilling. Being a lawyer is a privilege, she says. "My ability to use what I've learned to give voice to the silent is something I've always taken seriously."

Given the silence of many sexual assault victims, that contribution can have a far-reaching impact. "Being able to stand with them when most people have turned their backs is incredibly powerful," she says.

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# Joanna G. Allison

**Staff Attorney, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Boston**  
**Graduated:** University of North Carolina School of Law

Joanna G. Allison knew from an early age that she wanted to even the playing field for people who, for one reason or another, struggle to fight their own battles. As a staff attorney for the Volunteer Lawyers Project, which provides legal assistance to low-income Boston residents, she works toward that goal every day.

With 20 years of service at VLP, Allison says she hopes her work gives people "a little leg up" so they can stop being victims and take charge of their lives.

"It takes a great stress off of them because they are often dealing with a very complicated situation they haven't been trained to understand," Allison says. "It gives them great relief to be able to put that in someone else's hands."

Allison was instrumental in creating the "Lawyer for the Day" program at Boston Housing Court, which began in 1999 as a limited service for residents facing eviction, inadequate housing and other issues. The program grew to enable VLP lawyers to represent clients, and Allison is working to expand the program even further.

With about 200 eviction cases on the docket every week and the majority of residents representing themselves, the program fills a real need. Since the program began, it has helped about 25,000 people, Allison estimates.

Allison also helped to establish a similar program at Boston Municipal Court for low-income debtors. That program now includes a monthly discovery clinic at VLP, in which volunteer attorneys help people with discovery in collection lawsuits.

"A mansion is limited to the wealthy people, but the right to enjoy life and to have some peace in your life should be available to everyone," Allison says. "When we provide that sense of importance and belonging, it's a sense that you matter, that you are important enough."

Some of her most satisfying work has been representing elderly clients who have been victimized by predatory lenders that extracted high-interest loans with promises of home renovations that were either shoddy or never completed.

"Those cases brought a great deal of satisfaction to me when I was able to get these people made whole, and then some," Allison says.

That's in keeping with her service as a guardian for several elderly people who have developmental disabilities. She also serves as chair of the board governance committee for the Parent Professional Advocacy League, which advocates for families of children with mental illness.

Not content to rest on her achievements, Allison has her eye on two new projects: providing legal assistance to those facing foreclosure through tax-taking and individuals filing for bankruptcy.

Allison says she thrives on the opportunity to help those who need it the most: "I actually feel that I'm one of the luckiest people alive. I work with really committed, hard-working people, and I actually for the most part like my clients. ... These are people I respect and admire because everything is such an effort, so I feel very fortunate to be able to do that."

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# Lisa G. Arrowood

**Founding Partner, Arrowood Peters, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Harvard Law School

When Lisa G. Arrowood was still in law school, she knew that she wanted to try cases. Even before graduating, she gained experience in the courtroom through Harvard Defenders, which represents low-income criminal defendants. After graduating, she sought a position at Hale & Dorr because of its reputation for renowned trial lawyers.

“I was always of the view that I’ll try any case,” she says. “I just wanted to try cases.”

Eventually, she focused her practice on business litigation, medical- and legal-malpractice, personal injury and employment disputes. She has achieved some of the largest jury verdicts in Massachusetts, including a \$10.5 million verdict for the family of a severely disabled child in a med-mal case.

“I’m proud of that because it made such a huge difference to that family getting that money, and we tried an amazingly good case,” Arrowood says.

She also has obtained successful outcomes on behalf of an autistic boy who had been physically abused and in a gender discrimination case against Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

Arrowood says that, like many lawyers, she is deeply motivated to expose wrongdoing and hold people accountable through the court system.

“When you represent families with a very seriously disabled child, you have a responsibility on your shoulders that is almost hard to describe, because these families need so much money to care for these children,” she says.

Arrowood also has represented clients such as ZONE Diet creator Dr. Barry Sears, Staples Inc., Fidelity Investments and Mered-

ith Corp., among others.

Trying a case is an intellectual undertaking that Arrowood thrives on, from figuring out the best evidence to establishing the order of witnesses to crafting an argument that will persuade jurors.

“It’s a very complex, moving process that you create,” she says. “More than anything, it’s the challenge of it and the opportunity to put together a bunch of building blocks and persuade someone so that your client wins.”

Arrowood is the 1st Circuit representative to the American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, which evaluates nominations of Article III judges.

“It’s one thing to sit around and complain about the quality of judges you appear before, which lawyers are wont to do on occasion. But this opportunity to have something to do with who gets on the bench and who doesn’t, that ... has been really rewarding,” she says.

Arrowood also serves on the Board of Bar Overseers and, starting this fall, will serve as secretary for the Boston Bar Association. She has been a frequent lecturer, panelist and faculty member at a variety of continuing education and training seminars and received national recognition for her legal expertise.

Working as a trial lawyer turned out to be the perfect fit for Arrowood, but she says it took her a while to realize it: “I was one of those people that, all through high school, everybody said I should be a lawyer. I used to say I was never going to be a lawyer.”

Fortunately for her clients, Arrowood changed her mind.

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# Stefanie A. Balandis

**Senior Attorney, Housing Unit — Greater Boston Legal Services**  
**Graduated:** Harvard Law School

As an advocate for safe, affordable housing for low-income individuals and those facing other challenges, Stefanie A. Balandis believes there’s nothing more fundamental than the roof over your head. An attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services since 1996, Balandis specializes in housing issues, an area that also appeals to her love of litigation and courtroom work.

Much of Balandis’ practice centers on preserving affordable housing for individuals and groups. If the affordable housing contract is expiring for an entire development, for example, “You have to work very creatively to carve out a solution that is both appealing to the private owner and achieves real affordability long-term,” she says.

At the other end of the spectrum, Balandis has represented mentally ill individuals who are struggling to hold on to affordable apartments.

“It’s satisfying to be able to empower people at the margins,” she says.

Balandis loves the diversity of her work, which allows her to do everything from policy work to mediations, and of the people she represents. The elderly Italian woman who has lived in the same North End apartment for six decades, the multi-generational African-American family victimized by predatory lending, the Vietnamese man who has spent time in a re-education camp — Balandis says these are the people who make her work meaningful.

“This work is so profoundly satisfying on so many levels,” she says.

One of Balandis’ most memorable cases resulted in a federal consent decree that led to significant policy changes affecting due

process and privacy rights. The case was brought on behalf of Vietnamese families living in affordable housing who were subject to a SWAT team inspection. Among other changes, Balandis says, the city is now required to use a consent form for inspections and provide an interpreter for non-English-speaking residents.

More recently, Balandis began staffing a foreclosure defense project as part of a broader collaboration between attorneys and community organizers. The group, Project No One Leaves, is helping families facing eviction as a result of foreclosure.

Balandis also serves as the vice president of operations for the Women’s Bar Association.

She has worked in legal services throughout her career, from serving as president of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau while in law school to interning with the New Hampshire Public Defender’s Office. She also has worked in the former Yugoslavia and in Botswana on human rights and education issues.

Her experiences overseas inform her legal work, she says. “It helped me to better understand the cultural background and the unique circumstances of immigrants, because part of our work involves legal issues facing immigrants.”

Her passion to work in public interest law stems from a lifelong desire to fight for the underdog, Balandis says, even back when that meant sticking up for classmates who were being teased in school. She also credits her mother, who helped to instill the value to which Balandis has dedicated her career: “making the world a better place.”

MAW





# Jacquelynne J. Bowman

**Executive Director, Greater Boston Legal Services**  
**Graduated: Antioch Law School**

With years of experience in legal and family services, Jacquelynne J. Bowman says she takes the long view when it comes to creating change.

“When I was younger, I used to think the work we do will eradicate poverty in so many years,” she says, “but the older version of me really does appreciate how long that takes.”

What keeps her motivated, Bowman says, is knowing that the work she does today will benefit the next generation. Helping victims of domestic violence can build a better life for their children; enabling kids to stay in school can boost their journey out of poverty.

“If you’re in this long enough, you do see the next generation come around,” Bowman says, noting that the children of some former clients have grown up to be college students now interning at Greater Boston Legal Services.

Bowman, a passionate spokesperson for the underdog, traces her interest to childhood. She recognized early, she says, that some things weren’t fair, but she also noticed that people who had a strong advocate — like an attorney who could use the law on their behalf — often had a better outcome. Bowman decided she wanted to be someone who helps to equalize the playing field so everyone has a fair chance.

“I just feel like if things are wrong, we should try to fix them, for whoever the person might be, and that’s what I do,” she says.

As she began working in legal services, Bowman started making connections between the issues that affect families. She recognized the interrelated influences of poverty, education, juvenile justice, child support and family dynamics. That led her to focus on family law, and she spent several years heading the GBLS Family Law Unit.

Working to address those interrelated factors led Bowman to an achievement she counts as one of her proudest moments: changing the law so that domestic violence would be considered in child custody cases. She helped to draft language for the 209A amendment and wrote an amicus brief for a related case before the Supreme Judicial Court.

“It took us seven years to get that law passed and that’s one of the things that I’m most proud of,” Bowman says.

For GBLS clients, Bowman says it’s not too dramatic to say that legal assistance can be a matter of life and death, particularly for domestic violence victims and those with unmet housing needs.

“A lot of them ... don’t really see a way out, and I think the work we do helps people see a path to safety,” she says. “In other cases, I think it helps them plant their feet on that path out of poverty.”

Bowman serves on numerous local and national task forces and commissions, including the SJC Access to Justice Commission and the board of Massachusetts Advocates for Children.

“When I was a kid, I guess I used to always fight for my way,” Bowman says. “My mother used to always say, ‘You’re going to be a lawyer one day.’”

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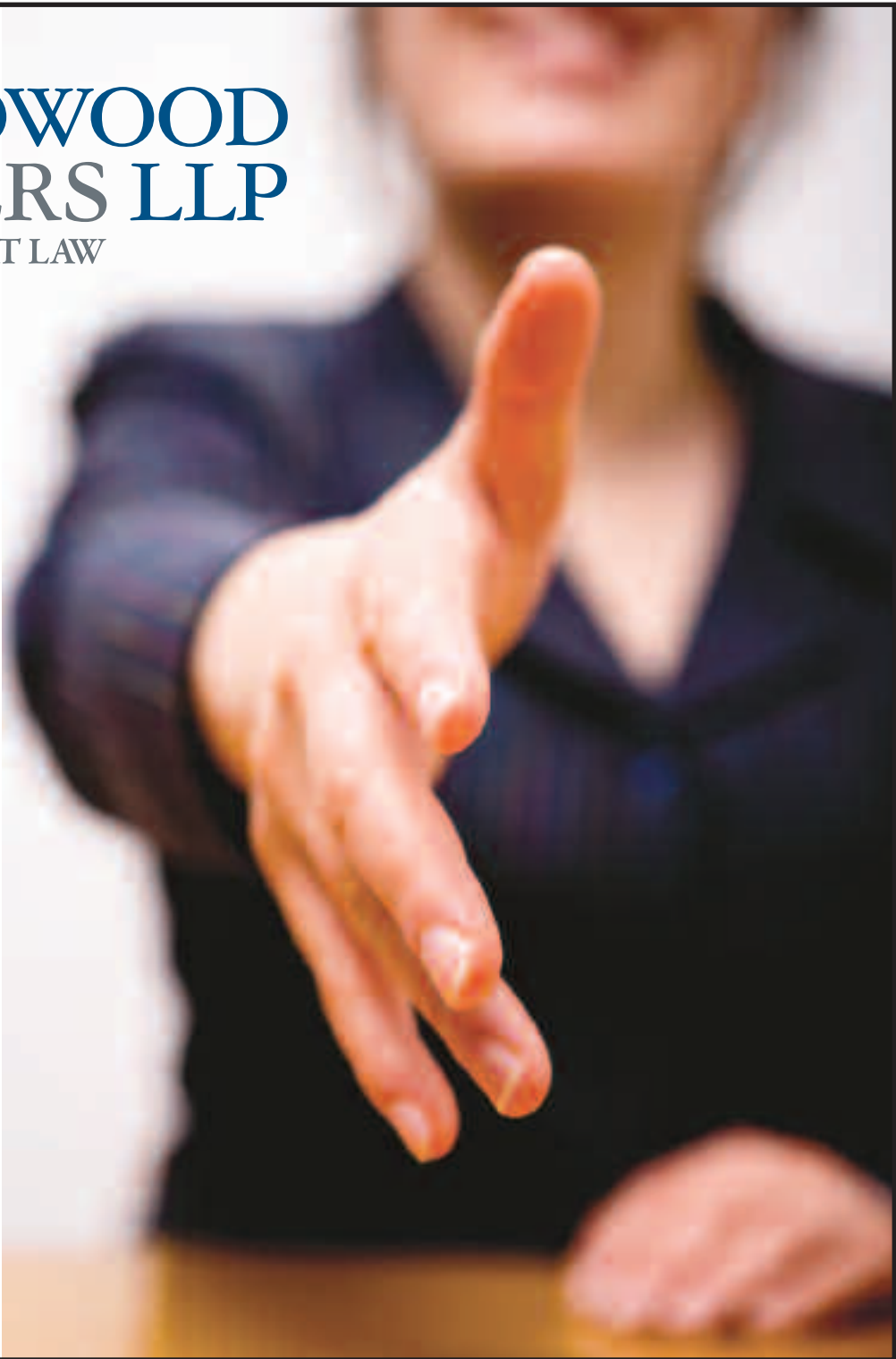
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# Justine H. Brousseau

**Founding Partner, Kimball Brousseau, Boston**  
**Graduated:** New England School of Law

In addition to her busy employment law practice, Justine H. Brousseau is devoting significant time these days to her duties as coordinator of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Regulations Project. Brousseau manages three committees that are reviewing guidelines and drafting proposed regulations to guide MCAD in interpreting sexual harassment, disability and maternity/paternity statutes. Brousseau co-chairs the committee for disability regulations. Spurred by a 2010 case in which the Supreme Judicial Court elected not to follow current guidelines, Brousseau and her law practice partner, Nina J. Kimball, recognized the need for new regulations. The initiative began with maternity leave law, but the project quickly expanded to include disability and sexual harassment. A challenging part of the process is gathering input from disparate participants and reaching consensus on the best proposals, Brousseau says. “We have broad stakeholders, from disability groups to chambers of commerce. You offer everybody a seat at the table and it makes it easier.” Brousseau and Kimball, who co-chairs the maternity leave committee, are veterans of the process, having been tapped by MCAD, the Boston Bar Association and the Massachusetts Bar Association in the 1990s to help craft guidelines. “We feel like it’s a way of giving back, but also a way, frankly, of helping everyone who practices on the MCAD staff or as a practitioner,” Brousseau says. “If you have good, clear instructions, that’s going to benefit everybody.”

Brousseau has wanted to be a lawyer for as long as she can remember, and she got the bug for employment law early, as a student in law school. Early in her career, Brousseau had an opportunity to work on a landmark case that allowed a same-sex couple to adopt. She argued before the Supreme Judicial Court, which held in her favor. Since then, she has represented both employees and management in state and federal court and before MCAD and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in a wide variety of employment matters, from wrongful terminations and on-the-job issues to exit strategies, litigation and appeals. She says the field remains challenging because employment law reflects changes in society and in technology. “We’re seeing now companies are having to develop completely new policies that 10 years ago, nobody would have even thought of having to have — Internet policy, Facebook policy,” Brousseau says. “One of the fascinating things about employment law is it’s one of those areas of law that are constantly changing.” As a lawyer at a boutique firm, Brousseau enjoys helping clients that range from large companies to small businesses and non-profit organizations. Doing a great job for an individual employee also makes the work rewarding. “There are those good days where you go home and realize you helped somebody who has just lost their job or you helped them save their job. Those are the real good days.” **MLW**



# Valerie S. Carter

**Founding Partner, Carter & Doyle, Lexington**  
**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law

Some professionals say they succeeded despite family challenges. Valerie S. Carter, on the other hand, says that being a young, single mother and fighting for educational opportunities actually helped her become a better attorney. “I have had to either sink or swim, both as a mother and as a lawyer, so I’ve learned to be aggressive, I’ve learned to be practical and I just learned how to do things on my own,” she says. Carter was not much older than 19, with two young children and a high school GED, when she approached the dean of Brandeis University and asked him to give her a chance as a college student. She finally convinced him to let her take three classes, with the deal that if she didn’t pass, she’d never bother him again. Carter did so well that Brandeis gave her a full academic scholarship. By the time her kids were teenagers, Carter had decided to go to law school. “I found people who were willing to take a chance on somebody that was unproven, and I guess my message to any girl who is in an inner-city school or is an unwed mother is to say to them, ‘Don’t give up. Just keep working. It will pay off,’” she says. “Try the unconventional approach, because if you don’t ask, you’ll never know.” As a new attorney, Carter had few female colleagues, let alone mentors, in her field of financial law. As an enforcement attorney at the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the Securities

and Exchange Commission, she often encountered resistance from attorneys unaccustomed to working with a woman. “They would look at me and want to teach me a lesson in how little I knew, but with the personality that I have, that motivated me more to show them what I really know.” That led to opportunities to prosecute some of the region’s first high-profile insider trading cases. Carter then became senior counsel to RECOLL, a Fleet Bank subsidiary, joining the team that collected \$6 billion in debt as a result of the failure of Bank of New England. Carter leveraged that experience to start her own firm in 1996 and brought on her first partner five years later. She now represents securities firms in defense matters and individuals charged with federal crimes. While her clients may not always be sympathetic, Carter says she believes in making sure everyone gets a fair trial and the legal system works as intended. She holds several court appointments and lectures for the Massachusetts Bar Association. Carter’s experience as a young mother inspired her to become an annual volunteer at a hospital in Zimbabwe that cares for women and children with AIDS. She also contributes time to the Women’s Homeless Shelter and The Jimmy Fund, which supports cancer research. Bringing her education full circle, Carter serves as chairperson of Brandeis University’s Committee on Women and the Law. **MLW**





# Rebecca M. Cazabon

**Pro Bono Managing Attorney, Foley Hoag, Boston**  
**Graduated:** George Washington University Law School

Growing up in a bilingual family — her father was born in Cuba — Rebecca M. Cazabon learned early that language could either open doors or close them when it came to education, the law and other critical areas of society.

“From an early age, it was very important to me to be able to help folks that had trouble with the language,” she says. “I decided that one thing I’d really like to do is advocate for these people who had a really hard time.”

Cazabon now handles a wide variety of cases as Foley Hoag’s pro bono managing attorney. She joined the firm 14 years ago as its first managing attorney for the pro bono program, which handles close to 100 new matters through about 24,000 hours annually.

Many of her clients are low-income, Spanish-speaking individuals dealing with domestic violence, immigration problems, housing needs and other challenges.

“It’s hard enough accessing legal services and basic services ... when you speak the language and you have a legal right to be here. But when you don’t speak the language or you are not here legally, it makes it almost impossible to function,” Cazabon says.

With a number of clients in abusive situations, Cazabon helps some of them attain legal permanent residency under the Violence Against Women Act. Her expert assistance often proves critical in helping clients navigate the complicated legal maze. She also helps clients attain special education services, so a son with autism or a daughter with Down syndrome can receive the help they need. For

parents who are unaware of their rights or are terrified to seek help because they lack legal status, that makes a significant difference.

“The amount of fear and uncertainty about going into a court or into an agency and getting help is huge, so having a Spanish-speaking attorney who understands that the fear is real and handles the whole relationship very gently ... is huge,” Cazabon says.

The firm’s pro bono work also has led to victories in gay and lesbian civil rights, fair housing and political asylum cases, among others.

In addition to her casework, Cazabon supervises associates, develops training and works closely with nonprofit organizations. She also mentors new attorneys, passing on her knowledge and her passion.

“I didn’t go to law school thinking I was going to be running a pro bono project and handling cases for low-income people, but ... I have grown into the position and evolved,” she says. “It’s always changing and expanding and growing in different ways, and that’s very exciting.”

Cazabon says she takes great inspiration from her clients, no matter how difficult their situations: “I see people being able to overcome so many difficulties, and that really is what sticks with me.”

In 2007, Cazabon received the Victim Rights Law Center Shining Star Award for advancing the legal rights of sexual assault survivors in Massachusetts. Recently, she was appointed to the Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services by the Supreme Judicial Court. **MLW**

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# Nancy M. Cremins

**Litigator, Gesmer Updegrove, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law

As part of her practice in commercial, employment and intellectual property law, Nancy M. Cremins works with a variety of start-ups. In the process, she's observed that many female entrepreneurs struggle to obtain funding. But instead of just lamenting about the problem, she decided to put her money where her mouth is.

Last year, Cremins joined Boston's inaugural class of the Pipeline Fellowship, which trains female philanthropists to become "angel investors." After learning about due diligence, portfolio strategies, valuation, governance and other concerns, each investor is matched with an experienced angel and then invests in a woman-led, for-profit social venture in exchange for equity and a board seat.

The goal, Cremins says, is to "get more women out there funding so there are women entrepreneurs who are getting their businesses started." That, in turn, will make it easier for the next wave of female entrepreneurs.

Serving as a Pipeline fellow is a good fit for Cremins, who has a special interest in gender inequality, particularly the work-life issues that often lead women to drop out of the legal profession. She notes that while such problems show up in the workplace in many ways, the most discussed is the notion that women "can't have it all."

She wants to change the terms of the conversation. "The problem, in large part, is that this is still considered a women's issue. It's not a women's issue, it's a family issue, and until we can take it out of it just being a problem

for women, I don't think we're going to fix it, because everybody has to work together."

With two young children of her own, Cremins is familiar with the challenges inherent in pursuing career and family, and that's one reason she always says "yes" when someone asks her to be a mentor. She sees attorneys as a community with a mutual responsibility to make the profession better for everyone.

"To the extent that you have wisdom to share, or experience to share, why not provide that information to people to give them insight into what your career trajectory was like and to provide your war stories or best practices or tips?" she says.

Cremins is an active member of the Women's Bar Association, having served as president last year. That gave her the opportunity to testify on behalf of several legislative priorities, including a few that went on to victory. The organization helped to push through alimony reform and supported the Transgender Equal Rights Act.

"That felt like it was important work, and I was really honored to be part of it in the small way that I was," Cremins says.

In her day-to-day practice, Cremins enjoys helping companies solve problems, particularly smaller companies that may need to be creative because they don't have unlimited funds.

"I like to work with them as their trusted business advisor, to say, 'Here are the issues; how can we fix it?' and do more than just litigate," she says.

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*Top Women of law*



# Lisa J. Damon

**Partner, Seyfarth Shaw, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Fordham University School of Law

A few years ago, Seyfarth Shaw adopted an innovative client service model based on Lean Six Sigma efficiency principles, and Lisa J. Damon has been right in the middle of it ever since. In fact, she runs the award-winning initiative throughout the firm. That's in addition to her role as national chair of the firm's 375-attorney Labor & Employment Department, a position she has held since 2009.

In developing SeyfarthLean, the firm adapted principles of the Lean Six Sigma approach, which uses a series of tools and analyses to remove process inefficiencies. The firm also revised its pricing strategies to incorporate a range of fixed fees, phase fees and other novel approaches.

Damon says that by enabling the firm to think differently about the practice of law, the approach represents no less than a revolution in the industry. At Seyfarth, the model has changed everything from the summer associate program, now a fellowship program, to case management technology.

"We're an industry that has grown up based on charging by the minute, where the industry itself incentivizes inefficiency by that kind of billing model," Damon says. "What SeyfarthLean does is completely turn that model on its head and bring clients and law firms back to delivering value efficiently."

Implementing such changes has been a journey of collaborating with clients and continuing to identify opportunities for improvement.

"There's nothing more exciting to me than that combination of high expertise delivered

efficiently and with value, creating delighted clients," says Damon.

As the partner at the helm of SeyfarthLean, Damon underwent six months of training to become a "Green Belt," a Six Sigma designation.

In her employment law practice, Damon represents management in discrimination and harassment litigation, helps employers create more diverse and inclusive workplaces, and consults with clients to help them avoid litigation by improving human resources practices. The people-centered nature of the work makes it satisfying, she says, and affords her the opportunity to work across a wide range of industries.

"It's a way to have a broad-scale impact on employees by making people's lives better in the workplace," she says.

When cases do go to trial, Damon says nothing makes her happier than being on her feet in a courtroom. A former schoolteacher, she says there's an element of educating juries about a case that appeals to her: "You take something very complex and distill it down and make it understandable and believable and get people enthusiastic about your position, which is very similar to teaching."

Damon was one of the founding partners of the firm's Boston office, which opened in 1999 with seven attorneys and now has about 80. She also was the first woman to serve on the firm's executive and compensation committees.

There are very few things, in fact, that Damon doesn't enjoy about her job: "It's a fabulous job, soup to nuts. I consider myself incredibly fortunate."

MLW



# Jennifer K. Dieringer

**Managing Attorney, Community Legal Aid, Northampton**  
**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law



LAURIE FRANKL

While pursuing her own career in representing low-income individuals in family law, housing and other cases, Jennifer K. Dieringer is thoroughly enjoying the rewards of introducing new attorneys to public interest work.

Dieringer, who once served as an AmeriCorps fellow representing domestic violence survivors, now supervises the AmeriCorps attorneys who come to work at Community Legal Aid.

“It’s so wonderful to see new attorneys get excited about the issues and the impact they can have on our clients’ lives,” she says. “I feel like it’s a privilege to help usher them in to their first years of practice and hopefully get best practices under their belt and a good foundation for going forward.”

Dieringer has known since college that she wanted to pursue public interest work, and even on the toughest days, she still feels confident that she was able to help at least one person.

“As I do the work longer and longer, I see the challenges inherent in doing the work,” she says, adding that many legal aid offices have struggled to stay afloat. “But it also makes me want to dig my heels in to make sure we stay in existence, because there’s really nobody else to help folks.”

Without the agency, most clients would be left to represent themselves, she says, burdened by language issues, disabilities and other obstacles.

“What we do is equalize the playing field in that way and really help them get access to justice and make sure their rights are preserved

and they get what they need from the system.”

Community Legal Aid also takes on advocacy and policy work, so Dieringer has lobbied legislators on custody statutes, worked on appellate cases, and trained attorneys and social services providers. Performing both case work and advocacy is demanding, but leads to the best outcome, she says.

“You can’t really understand what issues need addressing on a higher level without working with the individual, so ... it’s challenging to do both ... but I think it’s incredibly important,” she says.

One satisfying case she worked on involved the due process rights of litigants in Probate & Family Court in a win before the Supreme Judicial Court. The case set parameters under which the court could obtain information from Department of Children & Family records.

“I feel like that’s probably the most important work I’ve done because of the potential impact on so many people,” Dieringer says. “The individual casework is so rewarding in that I get to know my clients and really feel like I’m making a difference in their lives, but the idea that I could have an impact on so many litigants is pretty incredible.”

Dieringer rounds out her work by teaching, having spent one year at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law’s poverty law clinic and, most recently, at the Smith College School of Social Work.

Her path, she says, has been as rewarding as she expected: “I can’t really imagine doing anything else.”

MLW

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# Janet M. Donovan

**Supervising Attorney, Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc., Boston**

**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

As the supervising attorney at Casa Myrna Vazquez, Janet M. Donovan manages the agency’s Legal Advocacy Program, which provides legal representation to victims of domestic violence.

Donovan was first inspired to become an attorney while working as an advocate at another domestic violence agency, where she saw first-hand the potential to help people through legislative work and client service. Before joining Casa Myrna 13 years ago, she was in private practice with a focus on domestic relations, a concern that has always driven her work: “I’m very motivated to do my part to stop violence against women.”

While anyone can seek legal advice on domestic violence from Casa Myrna’s hotline, the agency is limited to representing victims with low incomes. Often, financial difficulty is just one of many challenges they face, including language and cultural issues, in addition to an abusive relationship, Donovan says.

“Most of our clients have a number of different hurdles they have to surmount before they actually are able to get access to legal services, so we hope this is a shortcut, having a multi-service agency,” she says. “What it gives people really is an opportunity to feel as though they have a voice and someone who can help them express to a judge what they need and want to keep themselves safe.”

With an on-staff team of three attorneys, including Donovan, the Legal Advocacy Program also relies on attorneys from AmeriCorps and Equal Justice Works and on interns from law schools. Having to turn away clients

because of a lack of resources is one of the toughest parts of her job, Donovan says.

When the success stories do happen, they make the hard days worthwhile. Donovan says one of her most memorable cases involved a young Spanish-speaking woman from a rural part of Central America whose family came to the United States without documentation. The woman had no education beyond the third grade and was a victim of domestic violence by an abuser who would not allow her to learn English. Donovan still remembers accompanying the woman to the courthouse, where she insisted on telling her story to the judge, in Spanish.

Watching the woman have her say was extremely gratifying, Donovan says. Best of all, the woman won her case.

Another reward that keeps Donovan motivated is seeing a good turnout for sessions that train attorneys to work for the agency pro bono, especially when the attorneys come back to handle a second or even a third case.

In addition to mentoring interns at Casa Myrna, Donovan also brings her expertise to the classroom at Northeastern University School of Law and Suffolk University Law School.

She is a board member of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and a member of the Massachusetts Domestic and Sexual Violence Council.

Donovan has been honored with the Women’s Bar Association’s Leila J. Robinson Award, recognizing her contributions to the legal field, and with its Pro Bono Publico Award. **MLW**



# Stephanie L. Everett

**Chief of Staff, Department of Transitional Assistance, Boston**

**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

As chief of staff for the Department of Transitional Assistance, Stephanie L. Everett is part of a team that provides food, job, financial and other assistance to 875,000 people in Massachusetts. One out of eight Commonwealth residents receives some form of public assistance, Everett says. What’s unique about her story is that as a young, single mother in an abusive relationship, she once was one of them.

Everett joined the DTA earlier this year after working in private practice, serving as deputy chief of staff to state Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz and making a bid for the Boston City Council in 2011.

Back when she was trying to build a better life for herself and her children, Everett says she would have “never in a million years” believed she would one day hold a key position at DTA.

“I can’t even express, really, in words how humbling it is to be here and being able to relate to a lot of the struggles that our clients face every day, because I’ve had to do that myself,” Everett says. “I remember ... having times where you’re trying to figure out do you buy food or do you pay a bill, and we have clients that face that every day, so I know that struggle and how hard it is.”

Everett says she always knew she wanted to be a lawyer. Initially she set her sights on becoming a prosecutor, helping to better the

system by offering resources other than prison. But eventually she found her way to legislative work.

“I realized at some point that if I was part of the process that makes these bills, it would be beneficial,” she says. “More than just depending on that law, I could actually help to make the law.”

Legislation plays a key role in her current position, where Everett serves as a liaison between lawmakers, the governor’s office and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. She handles policy and budget matters and evaluates proposed legislation for the impact it may have on DTA clients.

If others take anything from her story, Everett says she hopes it will be the realization that many people who receive public assistance truly want to move out of the system.

“People who are on services do not want to stay on services forever,” she says. “There’s a reason why there is ‘transitional’ in our name. That is the hope, the goal — to help people become more self-sufficient.”

When that happens, Everett says, there’s nothing better. She says that even when she is working on legislation until midnight or fighting for more funding, it’s worth it knowing she is pursuing something greater than herself.

“If just one person is able to transition off, it’s the best feeling in the world,” she says. **MLW**





# Betty Francisco

**Executive Vice President, Corporate Relations and General Counsel  
Millennium Partners Sports Club Management, Boston**

**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law

As the in-house counsel for Millennium Partners Sports Club Management, which operates The Sports Club/LA and Reebok Sports Club/NY, Betty Francisco handles both legal and strategic matters for seven premier clubs around the country. With an MBA to complement her law degree, Francisco is responsible for risk management, real estate, litigation, intellectual property, commercial transactions and corporate compliance.

One of the best parts of her job has been the opportunity to shape the legal department from the ground up and expand her role beyond that of a conventional general counsel.

“I know strategically everything that happens with the business, so I’m able to contribute to that while having on the legal risk management hat,” she says. “Having been able to build the department and create it is something I’m particularly proud of, because Legal here is something that people look at as a resource.”

Francisco credits her business background with helping her provide even better advice to her in-house clients. “The MBA gave me that extra leg up to be able to understand the business issues, as opposed to just looking at something from a legal standpoint alone.”

Outside of Millennium, Francisco is executive vice president of the Boston chapter of ALPFA (formerly the Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting) and leads its law program. A few years ago, she read a Hispanic Bar Association study noting that few Latinas pursue a law degree, and those who do often do not stay in private-sector positions. One of the recommen-

dations was to create more professional connections among Latina professionals.

Francisco read that recommendation and ran with it. This year, she launched the Latina Circle, a partnership between ALPFA and the HBA. The program kicked off in June with a power networking breakfast that brought together younger, minority attorneys and senior women, including U.S. Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz.

“There are so few Latino and Latina lawyers to begin with, we thought, why don’t we at least do something with the ones that are here and have a forum for them to connect?” Francisco says. “There’s nothing like this.”

The Latina Circle will meet quarterly and include mentoring, with emphasis on helping women develop connections.

“A lot of times, the issue for us is that we are not able to get access to leaders, because we are not connected, so that’s what we’re trying to do,” she says.

Hoping to see more Latina attorneys move into partner and general counsel positions, Francisco says she wants to encourage younger women to stay in the law to build that pipeline.

For herself, she is proud of being the first member of her family to attend law school, an achievement she attained without the benefit of a large number of role models, she says. She is also eager to continue working on Millennium’s strategic initiatives, solving problems and planning for the future. With the company in an active growth mode, Francisco says she will have plenty to keep her busy.

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# Michele M. Garvin

**Partner, Ropes & Gray, Boston**

**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

In her 25-year practice at Ropes & Gray, Michele M. Garvin has handled plenty of big cases and complex transactions, but what she most takes pride in are “the little things.”

“Often, opportunity doesn’t come from the big things,” she says. “Opportunity builds on a series of small and persistent high-quality, dedicated work. And that’s where the big opportunity comes from.”

Garvin also takes pride in the fact that she still has many of the same clients she had when she started her career, retaining them through her dedication to top-notch client service.

“As they’ve grown up in their careers and as I’ve matured as a lawyer and become a partner, we’ve kind of gone through the whole health care world together, and that means a ton to me,” she says.

A former chair of the firm’s health care group, Garvin represents academic medical centers, hospitals, physician practices, health maintenance organizations, insurers and pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Her specialty is rewarding, she says, because health care represents the intersection between the practice of law and public policy.

“For the entire time I’ve been a health care lawyer, as a society and as a government, whether state or federal, they’ve been posing the same questions of how do we appropriately regulate the cost of health care, the quality of health care and access to affordable care,” she says. “How the government answers those questions at any particular point in time impacts an entire industry.”

Add in the fact that every individual also has a stake in the health care industry, and

Garvin says it all makes for a fascinating area of practice.

The most satisfying — and challenging — matter she has worked on grew out of her long-term relationship with the Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans. When Hurricane Katrina devastated the city in 2005, Garvin helped the university relocate the medical school for almost a full year, including finding programs around the country that could take in approximately 500 medical school residents.

“We worked on the reopening of the school and general issues about restructuring post-Katrina, and that was an incredibly rewarding experience,” Garvin says.

In her pro bono practice through the Medical-Legal Partnership, Garvin contributes to the firm’s adoption of the Dorchester House, including a weekly legal intake clinic that screens for issues involving housing, utility shutoffs, immigration, family law, education and income supports.

“I have a great love for that community, so for me it’s a real opportunity to give back,” she says.

“There are some incredibly complex cases and incredibly challenging life circumstances that people live in. It’s really the kind of partnership between law and medicine that I think makes a real contribution.”

Looking back on her tenure with the firm, Garvin says she never thought when she joined Ropes & Gray as a first-year associate that, 25 years later, “I’d still be sitting here. I just feel incredibly fortunate to have had that experience.”

MLW





# Frances A. Gershwin

**Partner and Co-Chair, Real Estate Group, Burns & Levinson, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Boston College Law School

Growing up, Frances A. Gershwin remembers her mother calling her a “sidewalk superintendent” and having to pull her past every construction site they happened to pass. “I was looking at the cranes and the hard hats and the digging — it all seemed fascinating,” Gershwin says. As a college student, she wanted to do construction work during the summers, but at that time women weren’t exactly welcome on a job site.

Gershwin found a way to satisfy her interest in building, design and architecture through her law career, however, by developing her expertise in real estate, land use planning and public construction. With a special interest in environmental law, she also helps clients execute projects in a way that is environmentally responsible.

One of her most satisfying projects was working from start to finish on the Shalin Liu Performance Center, which opened in 2010 in Rockport. Gershwin led the team at Burns & Levinson that handled all the legal work for the new building.

“We did everything from the land acquisition to the permitting to dealing with potential zoning changes to contracts with designers and contractors,” she says. “That was really nice, to be so intimately involved in such a seminal project.”

Gershwin came to the law after a 10-year career teaching high school mathematics, during which she became active in collective bargaining for teachers. Her experience in labor relations spurred her decision to leave the field of education and attend law school.

Gershwin works for several independent public authorities, helping them create institutional development plans that can guide long-

term planning and cumulative environmental impact. Anticipating future needs is challenging, but keeps her work interesting, Gershwin says. Her work requires a broad understanding of a variety of industries and the ability to help clients appreciate a range of possible outcomes.

“Sometimes it’s really helping them to focus on what it is they really need, as opposed to what they think they want,” she says.

Gershwin’s interest in environmental issues extends beyond her clients’ projects, however. In 2011, she received the Environmentalist of the Year Award from the Brookline Conservation Commission in recognition for her work on the Muddy River Restoration Project. Despite working on the project since 1999, she describes herself as the “new kid on the block” compared to advocates who have been involved since the 1970s.

Gershwin was appointed as the chair of a citizens’ oversight committee formed to ensure the river, part of Boston’s 1,100-acre Emerald Necklace, is properly restored and maintained. The project, which involves multiple jurisdictions, will bring the river out from under the concrete where it has been partially buried for decades.

“We’re charged with making sure the governmental entities do what they are supposed to do and comply with all environmental requirements,” Gershwin says.

When Gershwin joined the project, she thought the work would have been long finished by now. Instead, the first phase of the work is just starting. But inspired by her mother’s volunteerism and her own love of public parks, she is committed to seeing it through.

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# Gail A. Goolkasian

**Vice President, Employment, Labor and Benefits Law**  
**Ahold USA Inc., Quincy**  
**Graduated:** Harvard Law School

As an in-house attorney for a large chain of grocery stores, you could say Gail A. Goolkasian has an unusually high number of clients — 117,000 of them, in fact, who are employed at 750 supermarkets in 14 states and Washington, D.C.

She directly oversees a team of 10 that handles Ahold USA's employment matters, defending the company against claims, handling union issues and working closely with human resources staff to establish policies, procedures and training.

In many companies, Goolkasian says, in-house attorneys are seen as more of a roadblock than a resource, and she is proud of the fact that she is considered someone who helps to solve problems. Her colleagues feel that so strongly that they gave her an award to recognize her outstanding contributions.

"That was voted on by the business folks in the divisions, basically my internal clients, so that was a very nice thing," she says. "I pride myself on being viewed as someone who is helping to move things forward."

Goolkasian, who has been at Ahold since 2006, was an associate at Hill & Barlow before spending nine years at The Gillette Co. as assistant general counsel and four years as a vice president at Shop & Shop Supermarket Co.

Employment law is a good fit for Goolkasian, who loves the combination of a people-centered practice with constantly evolving legal issues. "It's an area where the law, in my time in practice, has changed dramatically, so there are always new developments."

Her goal is to make a proactive contribution to company initiatives to prevent problems from ever happening, and being part of the management team is a fulfilling way to do that, she says. She also loves the opportunity to shape business decisions.

"You make the most impact by helping the company position itself correctly on all kinds of things that relate to employment," she says. "I don't view the role as just defending claims once they happen, but helping the company do the right thing so you don't end up with claims."

Goolkasian is a frequent writer and speaker on employment law topics. She also serves on the advisory board for the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and contributed to a committee organized to recommend changes to MCAD on employment law regulations.

While she always wanted to be a lawyer, Goolkasian wasn't sure it would be in the cards for her, growing up at a time when women's options were more limited. College broadened her aspirations, she says, as did the mentors and supporters who have helped her along the way. "You never forget those people who expressed confidence in you to take the next step," she says.

Applying her expertise to her current field has turned out to be an interesting coincidence given her family history, Goolkasian says: When she was growing up, her grandfather owned a small grocery store in Charlestown.

"I've kind of gone back to my roots, in a sense, working for a company that runs grocery stores," she says.

MLW

# Congratulations



## Gail A. Goolkasian

*Vice President Employment, Labor, Benefits Law*

On behalf of the entire Ahold USA family, we are proud to congratulate Gail A. Goolkasian, a Lawyers Weekly 2012 **Top Women of Law** honoree.



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# Maura T. Healey

**Chief, Public Protection & Advocacy Bureau  
Attorney General's Office, Boston**

**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law

The state's successful challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act in U.S. District Court is historic, but Maura T. Healey, who led the case on the attorney general's behalf, says she never thought of it that way.

"You don't think about making history; you just think about trying to do good legal work," she says. "I really thought about it as I approached all litigation: What's the issue? What's the problem you're trying to address? What's the applicable law? What are the facts you need to marshal? What are the arguments you need to make?"

*Massachusetts v. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, along with a companion case filed by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, challenged the prohibition on federal recognition of same-sex marriages. The 1st Circuit affirmed the challenge earlier this year and the case is pending before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"We're talking about a real injustice and hardship for families and married couples here in the state, and we saw an opportunity for us as a state to have a positive role in taking that law head on," Healey says.

Developing the legal strategy was a great experience, she says, crediting Attorney General Martha Coakley with giving her the opportunity and serving as an inspirational role model.

"It was very satisfying because I got to put together the team here, put together the pro bono assistance team, work directly with GLAD and the wonderful lawyers there, and

arrange the stakeholders, bar associations, corporate counsel and the like," Healey says.

As chief of the Public Protection & Advocacy Bureau, she oversees more than 120 lawyers and staff in cases involving civil rights, consumer protection, environmental protection, antitrust, health care, and insurance and financial services. What makes her work fulfilling, she says, is being able to affect issues that touch residents on a daily basis, whether they are victims of a consumer scam or concerned about pollution in a local river.

"I have the opportunity ... to try to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people across the state," she says. "It's a real privilege."

Healey has served on numerous special-interest task forces and initiatives, including the Attorney General's Military Veteran and Servicemember Task Force, and worked closely on anti-bullying legislation.

She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association's Kevin Larkin Memorial Award. She also is a member of the New England Basketball Hall of Fame in recognition of her athletic achievements as an undergrad at Harvard University.

"There are any number of cases that don't receive the kind of attention DOMA has received, but they are no less important to the individuals involved," Healey says. "I'd like to think, as a lawyer, that I apply the same effort and thought to those cases as I apply to some of the cases that perhaps garner more public attention."

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# Vickie L. Henry

**Senior Staff Attorney, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, Boston**

**Graduated:** Boston University School of Law

When Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders called Vickie L. Henry and asked her to join its staff, she surprised herself by saying "yes." She had volunteered for GLAD for more than 20 years, but she also was settled into a 16-year career and partnership at Foley Hoag, practicing in commercial, intellectual property and products liability litigation.

As a law student, Henry originally planned to pursue civil rights or legal aid work, but found herself enjoying the intellectual challenge of big-firm cases. In her last trial, she obtained the fifth-highest verdict of that year in an IP case.

While at Foley Hoag, Henry was part of the pro bono team that served as co-counsel with GLAD in *Gill v. Office of Personnel Management*, the case challenging the constitutionality of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Part of her role was the arduous task of identifying individuals who had been harmed by DOMA and were willing to participate in the case as plaintiffs.

Watching those plaintiffs endure the process of repeatedly applying for spousal benefits and being rejected was a necessary part of the case as it worked through the legal system, but it was difficult, Henry says.

"It's one thing to know that someone is going to disregard your marriage and disrespect your rights, but it's another thing to actually have it happen," she says.

For Henry, working on the DOMA case represented part of the fight to ensure civil rights are available to everyone.

"It's important for everyone, in whatever

ways they can, to try to make the world a better place, and I feel like getting full equality for our citizens is a piece of that," she says. "I felt like this law, which harmed so many people and basically disregarded lawful marriages of same-sex couples, was incredibly painful and harmful to couples. It was great to be able to give that my attention."

When GLAD's job offer arrived, Henry was ready to make the leap to focus full time on advocating for those who need it. Henry also leads GLAD's youth initiative, which offers help and education to young people facing unstable housing, bullying and discrimination.

"This is a vulnerable segment of our population and they need help," she says.

Henry has earned numerous honors for her work, including the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association Pioneering Spirit Award in 2008. In 2011, she received the Davis Carr Outstanding Committee Chair Award from DRI-The Voice of the Defense Bar, recognizing her service as leader of the organization's 1,500-member Commercial Litigation Committee. Henry also has held positions with MassEquality and with the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association.

Working at GLAD is a great follow-up to her successful practice in commercial litigation, Henry says. After years of contributing her time to worthy causes on a volunteer basis, she says it feels like a luxury to devote all day, every day, to issues she finds rewarding.

"I feel very lucky," she says. "I think I have the best of both worlds."

MLW





## Erin K. Higgins

**Partner, Conn, Kavanaugh, Rosenthal, Peisch & Ford, Boston**

**Graduated:** Boston College Law School

Erin K. Higgins has taken on several key roles since joining her firm in 1994: risk management partner, co-chair of the professional liability practice group and chair of the Pro Bono Committee. As if that weren't enough, she also is an active mentor to younger attorneys, particularly women.

Mentoring is important to Higgins, who entered the profession at a time when female partners were few and far between. That left a dearth of role models for new attorneys struggling to balance the demands of work and family.

"Having done that myself, that's something I can share with younger people at the firm," she says, adding that she tries to be as candid as possible about the realities of running a law firm, making partner and other career milestones.

In today's economy, the road is even tougher, but Higgins sees signs of improvement. There is more emphasis now on the importance of developing all aspects of professional skills, in addition to serving clients well.

"There's more recognition among women that we need to help each other develop," she says. "Younger women are being encouraged to develop those skills at a younger age and to be more driven and focused on business development."

With a practice in business litigation and in professional and products liability defense, Higgins loves helping her clients navigate difficult situations and advocating for them in court. For someone who thrives on the adrenaline of a demanding case, there's nothing

quite as energizing as being on trial, she says.

"A lot of the cases that come to my desk are very different, so they all involve a unique set of facts and, particularly doing professional liability work, you often get to learn about an entirely different area of the law, which is very interesting," she says.

Her pro bono cases are equally rewarding because they enable her to make a difference in the life of one individual. In one case, she represented a client facing an array of challenges — sexual and domestic abuse, immigration and custody issues, and separation from her children. Higgins helped the woman resolve her legal problems, obtain legal immigration status and reunite with her family.

"That's a complete and total success story," Higgins says. "My approach has always been to treat those clients just like paying clients. That's been a very rewarding part of my practice."

Among other professional involvements, Higgins represents attorneys before the Board of Bar Overseers. She also serves as a member of the Supreme Judicial Court Standing Advisory Committee on Rules of Professional Conduct and the Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services.

While Higgins credits her supportive husband for enabling her to juggle so many activities, she says the payoff is well worth the time.

"I just don't see the point in being a lawyer if you're just sitting at your desk and working all day," she says. "For me, it makes life much more fulfilling to have things outside of my day job where I can contribute." **MLW**

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## Kimberly Y. Jones

**Founding Attorney & CEO, Athena Legal Strategies Group, Boston**

**Graduated:** Albany Law School

With a background in business and law, Kimberly Y. Jones strives to bring a well-rounded and broad perspective to help her clients respond strategically to employment and labor issues.

Jones says she considers how certain issues, such as harassment, may reverberate throughout a company and what steps her clients should take to implement forward-looking measures.

"It's not a legal issue in isolation, and that's why I think it's important to not only look at the legal issue and resolve that, but to look at its impact in the organization as a whole," she says.

Jones founded her firm three years ago, with the goal of eventually expanding her practice to include other attorneys. As the owner of a law firm, she relies, in part, on her previous career as a regional director for a pharmaceutical company, which required the ability to manage a territory, track business and develop relationships.

"Those are the same principles I use as an attorney, so that's how I was able to bring business and law together," she says.

Jones also defends clients before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. As a MCAD Certified Trainer, she helps companies implement training programs designed to prevent harassment and discrimination. For those with international operations and overseas workforces, Jones also provides strategic advice for navigating foreign laws and customs.

"You have a great number of organizations and companies that are sending people to international destinations to start new divisions or move into leadership roles, so there are times

when the same legal issues arise, but in a foreign country," Jones says. "Not only are you dealing with U.S.-based laws, but there's often an intersection of international or country laws."

She especially enjoys working with clients who have the foresight to anticipate changes in their industries or their workforces and seek to respond strategically.

"What I find rewarding is ... when organizations or employers recognize there are opportunities for them to expand and to be ahead of the curve," she says. "Those are rewarding moments when you recognize that it becomes a team effort."

A frequent speaker, Jones enjoys presenting on both law and business topics. In recent engagements, she moderated a panel on business development ("How to Make it Rain") for the Women's Bar Association's Women's Leadership Initiative, and spoke on personal branding for the National Association of Black Accountants' Annual Minority Business Conference.

A member of the MCAD advisory board, Jones has held leadership positions and mentoring roles with several professional organizations. She serves on the Board and Governance Committee of the Massachusetts Service Alliance, which is dedicated to volunteerism and provides funding for AmeriCorps programs. She co-chairs the Partnerships Committee of the Women of the Harvard Club and recently was chosen as the organization's vice chair.

"As a business person, I also happen to be a lawyer, and ... that experience and knowledge ... helps me resolve issues through an enhanced perspective," she says. "That's what I'm looking to bring to my clients." **MLW**





# H  l  ne Kazanjian

**Chief, Trial Division, Attorney General's Office, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Boston University School of Law

Practicing law within the sphere of government is a good fit for H  l  ne Kazanjian because it gives her the opportunity to do what's right, she says.

"We have a responsibility to the people that are citizens of the public body we represent, so I've always liked being in that position as a lawyer and feeling like you can do some good," she says.

Kazanjian found the intersection between law and the public sector early, working for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Boston during law school. Her career includes 19 years as an assistant U.S. attorney handling civil and criminal cases in Washington, D.C., as well as in Maine.

A case she handled during her stint in Maine still stands as one of her most satisfying: a series of prosecutions involving Oxy-Contin abuse. As the first in the country to identify the problem arising in rural areas, Kazanjian and her team pursued a comprehensive investigation that combined drug distribution and Medicaid fraud prosecution.

Kazanjian's work at the federal level earned her several commendations, including the Director's Award for Superior Performance as an assistant U.S. attorney in 2004, the Inspector General's Integrity Award in 2003 and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association Prosecutorial Award in 2002.

Now, as chief of the Attorney General's Office Trial Division, Kazanjian supervises about 30 attorneys and support staff. Since taking the position two years ago, she has focused on developing innovative, technol-

ogy-based strategies for case management and e-discovery.

Those who know Kazanjian for her prowess as a trial lawyer may not know she's also a computer buff; she was an early adopter of using litigation support tools in the courtroom.

A veteran of more than 100 jury trials, Kazanjian says the achievement she is most proud of is becoming a top-notch trial attorney.

"I've spent a lot of time developing the craft," she says. "It's the kind of thing you have to do over and over again to get a real feel for what works and what doesn't. Each time you try a case, it's a whole new thing in some respects."

She thrives on the judicial process as well as the multi-dimensional demands of a trial, which require a multitude of skills.

"It's law and psychology and government at its best," Kazanjian says. "You see a slice of life in a courtroom that you don't see sitting behind a desk."

With a firm belief that preparation is everything, Kazanjian enjoys helping her staff attorneys analyze cases and set the best possible foundation for a successful outcome.

"Being in the courtroom where you have to tell a story and then you put it in the hands of people who aren't lawyers ... and ask them to make the final decision is a really interesting process," she says. "I love this process of being able to tell a story and trying to figure how to tell it in the clearest fashion so the jury is in the best position to make the right decision."

MLW



# Jeanne M. Kempthorne

**Principal, Law Office of Jeanne M. Kempthorne, Salem**  
**Graduated:** Berkeley Law School

If not for Jeanne M. Kempthorne, Jimmy Hebshie might still be sitting in a prison cell, serving a 15-year-minimum sentence for an arson fire that his advocates say he couldn't possibly have started.

Kempthorne partnered with the New England Innocence Project after Hebshie's 2006 conviction, eventually winning his release from prison on a habeas petition. The state dropped all charges against Hebshie last year. Her petition turned on the application of *Daubert*, the U.S. Supreme Court case dealing with scientific expert testimony.

"This case was important for showing practitioners that *Daubert* has life in the criminal area," Kempthorne says. "It has a lot of traction in civil cases, but had been given short shrift on the criminal side."

A federal trial court found that Hebshie was entitled to a *Daubert* hearing, which would have kept out much of the state's evidence.

Kempthorne has lectured at several regional and national conferences about raising *Daubert* challenges. The Hebshie case remains a special achievement: "I am most proud of getting Jimmy Hebshie out from under a very unfair conviction and getting him out of prison."

In her practice, Kempthorne focuses on criminal defense, mostly state and federal appeals, and her love for mediation.

"Mediation has the power to transform not only relationships and situations, but the people themselves," she says. "I get an incredible surge of excitement and happiness when I am able to facilitate a resolution not only to the dispute, but to a relationship, and to promote

healing of a wound that may be very old, particularly in civil disputes between family members."

Kempthorne opened her firm in 2003 after 11 years in the Economic Crimes Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office, where she prosecuted computer crime, intellectual property and trade secret cases. One of her cases there, while not a victory in the courtroom, spurred Congress to enact the No Electronic Theft Act of 1997, which expanded the scope of copyright infringement law.

Kempthorne served on the State Ethics Commission from 2005 to 2010, a period when it was undergoing significant changes in procedure, personnel and culture.

"It was a very big time of transition for the State Ethics Commission and it was exciting to be part of it," she says.

As a solo practitioner in appellate work, Kempthorne recognized that other attorneys like her would also benefit from peer reviews, so she created a group that holds informal moot courts for each other. Over dinner, members read each other's briefs and offer feedback to strengthen arguments.

"Moot courts are essential to get people to think hard about the parts of their arguments they may not have grappled with, and many people say they have found it very helpful," she says.

In her work as a prosecutor and as a defense attorney, Kempthorne's driving mission has been to maintain public integrity. With a personality that tends to be outraged by injustice, she says, the law is a perfect fit. "From a very early age, my mother would say to me, 'My gosh, unfair is your middle name.'" MLW



# Nina J. Kimball

**Founding Partner, Kimball Brousseau, Boston**

**Graduated:** George Washington University School of Law



Nina J. Kimball has been passionate about civil rights ever since she graduated from Yale University and realized that most women were still limited to entry level jobs. Appalled by that reality, she decided to attend law school and join the fight to increase opportunities for women and others.

While still a student, Kimball took a summer job at the Women's Legal Defense Fund in Washington, D.C., and she has focused on employment discrimination ever since.

"That is what really drives me as an attorney," she says. "I've always been interested in improving the lives of women."

Early in her career, Kimball benefited from working with strong civil rights attorneys, from Philip Hirschkop, the ACLU attorney in the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case in 1967 that struck down Virginia's interracial marriage ban, to Judge Spottswood W. Robinson III, one of the first African-American judges appointed to federal court and an attorney in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

"He really inspired me to want to do work in the civil rights area and work that helped to combat discrimination," Kimball says of Robinson. "I was very fortunate to have those opportunities. They really grounded me. They enabled me to say, 'This is work that is important. This is work that can be done.'"

As a member of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Regulations Project, along with her law practice partner Justine Brousseau, Kimball is part of an ambitious effort to propose new regulations to guide MCAD in applying maternity/pater-

nity leave, disability and sexual harassment statutes.

As co-chair of the maternity leave committee, Kimball helped write the original guidelines several years ago. She now leads a bipartisan committee that is reviewing those guidelines and reaching consensus on regulations for MCAD review.

"The whole point of these projects is to have some certainty, so that both employers and employees and the MCAD ... can have certainty in saying, 'This is the interpretation and the court is going to follow that,'" says Kimball, who is the editor of the Employment Law Guide, a reference for lay people now in its second edition.

She also was the lead author on an amicus brief submitted in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, the landmark case that successfully argued that not allowing same-sex couples to marry was unconstitutional.

"That was very exciting just to be involved in that court case," Kimball says, calling discrimination against gays and lesbians "and what is happening here in Massachusetts and across our country ... the civil rights issue of our time."

Writing amicus briefs on behalf of civil rights organizations is one of Kimball's most rewarding contributions, she says.

"It's a chance to dig into really interesting legal issues and be able to present them in a way that can make a difference to the appellate court when they need more information on a particular aspect of a case," Kimball says.

MLW

Top  
Women  
of law

# Robyn B. Klinger

**Associate General Counsel, EMD Serono, Inc., Rockland**

**Graduated:** Boston University School of Law



When Robyn B. Klinger decided to leave her 17-year labor and employment practice at Hale & Dorr, she knew she wanted to work in-house in a meaningful role for a company whose work she could feel good about. She found both of those qualities at EMD Serono, which develops therapies for fertility issues, autoimmune diseases and treatments in neurology, endocrinology and oncology.

The work has special meaning for Klinger, who lost her mother to cancer not long before she made her career transition.

"I really thought about where did I feel like I would be proud to say I was working in that industry and that company," she says. "The life sciences industry was something that drew me. It was an industry that helped people and I felt that, although I wasn't a scientist, it was a way to help people by using my talents as a lawyer."

Klinger handles labor, employment and related litigation matters throughout the company. She views her work as a great contribution to its mission because she sets up the programs and the systems that enable scientists and other employees to be more productive.

"What makes me come back to work every day is that I feel I am helping our employees, which, in turn, helps those who need medical care," she says. "Whether it's the people selling our product or the people in the labs that are out there trying to develop new products, our theory is that if we've got the right programs and this is a good place for them to work,

they'll be more successful in what they do."

Klinger is an active participant in the company's charitable activities, a way of giving back to the community that she has always believed in.

"I feel those of us that can should do something using our own skills and abilities," she says.

Klinger has helped to package daffodils and teddy bears to send to cancer patients as part of the American Cancer Society's Daffodil Days. She volunteered at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Bike MS: Cape Cod Getaway, the largest such ride in New England. And for the Friends of Mel Foundation, which supports people whose lives have been affected by cancer, Klinger packages special bracelets that the organization sends to donors.

Being an attorney was a good fit for Klinger, she says, because she always wanted to help people and she loves the challenge of mental puzzles. The practice of law has also become a family affair at home: Klinger's husband is a judge, her daughter is a law student and her son plans to attend law school upon finishing college.

Klinger serves on the board of editors for a legal treatise published by the American Bar Association and Bloomberg BNA, which keeps practitioners up to date on wage and hour laws throughout the country. She also is a co-chair for the New England region of the ABA's Trial Advocacy Competition for law students.

MLW





# Marianne C. LeBlanc

**Partner, Sugarman & Sugarman, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Boston College Law School

Marianne C. LeBlanc has much to be proud of in her pro bono, mentoring and organizational work, but at the end of the day, she says doing a great job for each client, one case at a time, is her most important achievement.

“That is really what it comes down to in terms of success,” she says.

As a trial attorney specializing in personal injury litigation, LeBlanc finds it especially rewarding to attain a more secure future for families who have suffered as a result of medical negligence, accidents and other tragedies.

LeBlanc always knew she wanted to try cases, and she fell in love with her practice area after joining Sugarman & Sugarman.

“What’s most rewarding about what I do is that I’m able to really make a difference in the lives of people and their families,” she says, “and that is very personally fulfilling, while at the same time I have the professional satisfaction of litigating and trying cases in court.”

A good trial lawyer must be a great communicator, she says, and willing to invest the time to truly understand clients in order to present their cases persuasively. Because she often handles complex medical or product liability cases, LeBlanc also has to be an effective teacher: “The jury has to understand the science involved in the case before they can make a decision about whether or not the standard of care was breached, so you’ve got to be able to break down very complicated concepts.”

Women often make excellent trial attor-

neys, LeBlanc says, because they tend to communicate effectively with juries, but she notes that practice demands and lifestyle issues still make trial work a challenge for many women. That’s one reason LeBlanc believes in serving as a mentor for less experienced female trial attorneys. As chair of the Women Trial Lawyers Caucus of the American Association for Justice, LeBlanc led and implemented the caucus’s first strategic plan, which emphasized mentorship.

“Because there are often very few existing role models in one’s immediate community, we realized, as a national trial lawyer association, we had a duty to provide mentorship to young women lawyers,” she says.

A past president of the Women’s Bar Foundation and the Women’s Bar Association, LeBlanc also reached out to minority female attorneys by founding the Women of Color Committee, which embraces diversity and provides networking opportunities.

In her pro bono work, LeBlanc was instrumental in organizing her firm’s “adoption” of the Harrington House, a home for children who are unable to live with their families. Once every year, the firm closes up shop for the day to perform renovations at the home, and throughout the year the firm supports the children with book drives, backpacks and holiday gifts.

LeBlanc said her career choice has enabled her to “advocate for people who didn’t have a voice.”

MLW



# Kelly A. Leighton

**Partner, Barnes & Leighton, Salem**  
**Graduated:** Boston College Law School

As an experienced family law attorney, Kelly A. Leighton knows first-hand how contentious divorce cases can be. She helped to improve that process by serving on the Legislative Task Force on Alimony Reform, which drafted the bill that became the Alimony Reform Act of 2011.

The new law gives judges more discretion in limiting alimony and provides a framework for attorneys to craft agreements appropriate for each case. Since the previous law was significantly outdated, it took a lot of cooperation among stakeholders to agree on what the new law should say, Leighton says.

“We all went into this room from very different points of view, and by the end of the process, we were able to reach a consensus,” she says. “It was really encouraging to be part of that process.”

Leighton discovered a love for legislative work a few years ago, while working with another committee to draft a bill proposing a change in the language courts use in family law cases. Among other changes, the group is advocating for courts to refer not to “visitation” but to “parenting time,” a phrase Leighton described as less emotionally charged.

“Language is powerful, and in these cases, if there is any help we can provide that will defuse the tension and the conflicts, we should provide that to help the parties get through that a little bit easier,” she says.

Leighton formed her own firm two years ago after more than 10 years with Greater Boston

Legal Services, where she was a senior attorney in the Family Law Unit. Much of her previous work involved representing low-income victims of domestic violence, a service she still provides to clients in addition to handling the range of issues involved in divorce cases.

In her practice, she says, “people are at some of the worst times in their lives, and I think aiding them through that process can be very rewarding, particularly in cases where there are children involved.”

She is proud of her work in legal services, which she describes as being real work in the trenches, as well as an opportunity to help those who believe they are powerless. “To be at that moment where clients who had been really brutalized and couldn’t see a way out, to be there at that moment where there’s at least a path out of it, that was so gratifying.”

Leighton is a long-time volunteer, mentor and trainer with the Women’s Bar Association Foundation’s Family Law Project, which trains attorneys to provide pro bono work to low-income domestic violence victims.

She plans to continue her legislative work, where the potential to have a widespread impact fulfills her desire to contribute to public service. It’s the reason, in fact, that she became a lawyer in the first place. “I was idealistic. This whole idea of equal access to justice was a very appealing concept to me, and it ended up being a very good fit. Becoming involved with law reform just takes it to another level for me.”

MLW



# Susan H. Levin

**Partner, Rosenberg, Freedman & Goldstein, Newton**

**Graduated:** Boston University School of Law



Many attorneys see ways to improve the laws governing their practice areas, but Susan H. Levin is one of the few who actually did something about it. She wrote legislation for the so-called Bank Fee Waiver Bill, participated in hearings and legislative meetings, and worked to get the bill passed.

The new law exempts elderly people from paying hundreds of dollars in bank fees to obtain the financial records they need to demonstrate Medicaid eligibility. When the rules changed in 2006 to require five years' worth of records, Levin knew that would place a financial burden on many of her clients.

"All I could think of was all my clients who don't keep their records or, if you have early dementia, you can't keep track of things," she says. "What we were seeing was the banks were charging elders several hundred dollars in research fees to look up all the account statements."

Levin worked with Medicaid to come up with the form elders would need to take to their banks.

"It's unusual to have an idea, write the legislation, work on its implementation and solve the problem, and that's what was so satisfying about it," she says.

Levin has participated in numerous legislative, regulatory and policy initiatives affecting elderly people and was twice voted as Outstanding Chapter Member by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys. She has

been on the chapter's board almost since its founding and serves as chair of its Public Policy Committee.

Levin always wanted to be an advocate for people who need help, but it was happenstance that her first job ended up being with senior citizens. It turned out to be a good fit. "It really tapped a number of my interests and talents in that I like working with older people, I like the people contact, and there's an element of social work ... involved in working with families and being supportive of individuals when they're in crisis."

Levin was one of the early practitioners of elder law when it was still emerging as a specialty. As a member of her firm's Estate and Probate Planning Group, she now helps clients with issues regarding Medicaid, elder law and estate planning. She also contributed to one of the first treatises on Medicaid planning, which continues to be revised regularly and is used in continuing legal education.

Levin says her legislative work is a source of great satisfaction, because it's a way to help large numbers of people — making it easier for people to qualify for nursing home coverage or protecting people from becoming impoverished when a spouse goes into a nursing home.

But her individual casework is equally gratifying: "It just gives me enormous satisfaction to be able to represent their interests and provide a service to them and have them feel comfortable in the process that they're being heard." **MLW**

*Top  
Women  
of law*

# Diane M. McDermott

**Partner, McCarter & English, Boston**

**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School



In both her real estate practice and her pro bono work, Diane M. McDermott is widely recognized as a professional whose leadership and dedication go above and beyond. The nature of her practice, which includes clients working on high-profile developments in downtown Boston, means she is intimately involved with projects that literally change the city's landscape.

Having lived in Boston for 35 years, McDermott says it is gratifying to be part of the city's expansion.

"I can help my clients avoid surprises and avoid pitfalls, and ... really what I enjoy doing is to help them be successful and be part of their team," she says.

With a background in accounting, McDermott anticipated that she would practice tax law. But she graduated from law school into a hot real estate market, so she elected to apply her financial savvy to that field. That decision has served her well, she says, allowing her to understand the finances behind clients' real estate deals: "I found a way to combine my two disciplines so, it was great."

One achievement McDermott especially values was joining the management committee at Gadsby Hannah, which merged with McCarter & English in 2006.

"That was a vote of confidence of the people in my organization, the people that I had grown up with through the practice of law, to become part of the three-person team that was selected to guide us as to where we were

going to go," she says.

During the firm's merger, McDermott also served on the transition team.

In her pro bono work, McDermott has spent several years as counsel to the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, whose CEO describes her as their "legal champion." She assists with real estate, employment, labor litigation and other issues, in addition to fundraising.

McDermott also serves on the board for the Women's Lunch Place, a day shelter for homeless and impoverished women. When the shelter needed a renovation, she handled the legal work and negotiations needed to make it happen. In just under five months, a team was able to raise money and complete the renovation, including a major kitchen upgrade.

"That was actually a very meaningful project because that's the place that these women call home during the day," McDermott says. "So many community businesses and community people were involved, and they all came together and donated their services."

She also finds time to mentor young attorneys, acknowledging that it is still a challenge for younger women, in particular, to navigate work-life issues and find their place within a law firm.

"It really is important for people who have found a way to make it work to support the younger people coming up, because then the profession is benefited," she says. **MLW**





# Dana M. McSherry

**Partner, McDermott, Will & Emery, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Boston College Law School

Attorneys know that while clients may be far from perfect, a pure system of justice is always worth striving for, and Dana M. McSherry demonstrated that value in a successful and demanding pro bono case.

In 2007, McSherry began representing a civilly committed transgender person who had been diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder. For more than 10 years, the Department of Corrections had denied the client's prescribed hormone therapy.

McSherry co-chaired the client's trial in U.S. District Court, where a judge found the DOC had violated the client's Eighth and 14th Amendment rights. On appeal, the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously affirmed the decision.

The outcome, McSherry says, was a victory for the rights of both transgender people and those seeking medical treatment while incarcerated.

"I feel strongly that ... whether or not medical care is necessary is something that needs to be determined by doctors, and not by DOC guards and officials," she says. "The implication of that, more broadly, was definitely one of the motivating factors in my working on the case."

That crux kept her committed through four years of work, despite the complicating factor of a client whose background made her less than sympathetic.

McSherry's investment of time was considerable, with countless briefs, numerous depositions and a week-long bench trial. She also happened to be eight months' pregnant during the trial.

"I always knew I'd be a working mom, but literally to be having my first federal trial that I was co-chairing while I was very pregnant was a cool moment — and exhausting at the same time," she says.

In her practice, McSherry handles government investigations, securities matters and complex commercial disputes. While she represents a number of corporate clients, she finds particular fulfillment in representing individuals.

"You develop a real relationship with the person ... and you realize how much the case really matters to them in their life," McSherry says.

She takes special pride in cases in which she has represented individuals before indictment and was able to convince the District Attorney's or U.S. Attorney's Office that her clients should not be indicted.

"Those are always very satisfying," she says.

A frequent volunteer and fundraiser for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, McSherry says she's "more than mildly obsessed" with her rescue dog, Murphy, who's spurred the entire family into getting involved with the MSPCA.

As a law student, McSherry originally planned to enter the legal aid field, but working at a large firm and pursuing pro bono projects has turned out to be a satisfying combination, she says. For now, she is on the lookout for her next pro bono case.

"It is a very important part of my practice," she says. "As are my paying clients; I love the complex white-collar work. I'm getting the best of both worlds."

**MLW**

*Top Women of law*



# Katherine J. Michon

**Partner, Shilepsky, Hartley, Robb, Casey, Michon, Boston**  
**Graduated:** New England School of Law

Described by Boston magazine as "one of the best negotiators in the business," Katherine J. Michon jokes that she's gotten plenty of practice raising her two teenage daughters.

In truth, she is a skilled and savvy employment law expert who represents individuals in wrongful termination cases, guides senior executives in transition, and advises professionals and small businesses on complex workplace issues.

"I've done everything from helping women who've been terminated because they were pregnant ... to working out exit deals for people in high levels to make sure they receive the compensation they believe they're entitled to. All of that has a legal aspect and a personal aspect that make it gratifying," she says.

One of her most memorable cases involved a woman with terminal cancer whom she represented in a disability discrimination suit. The settlement Michon achieved allowed the woman to provide for her family long-term, which was her ultimate goal. As a mother herself, Michon says she has a special affinity for the case.

"There's nothing more gratifying than helping people who have been discriminated against or are facing other challenges in the workplace," she says.

She attributes her success as a negotiator, in part, to her ability to understand the mindset of the other side, saying "you need to understand how the other person is looking at the same issue you are looking at so

you can come back with an argument that will be persuasive."

Michon is part of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination Regulations Project, an effort to establish new regs to guide MCAD in applying maternity/paternity leave, disability and sexual harassment statutes. She co-chairs the group tasked with working on sexual harassment regulations. Reviewing existing guidelines line by line and reaching consensus among stakeholders is a significant investment of time, Michon says, but the payoff will be worth it: a clear set of rules to guide practitioners and enable them to better advise clients.

Michon recently became co-chair of the Boston Bar Association's Labor and Employment Law Section. She also chairs the Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education Employment Law Advisory Committee and has held numerous positions in the Boston and Massachusetts bar associations.

She is a frequent writer and speaker on employment law, which she describes as a great way to stay on top of her game.

"The best way to learn the law is having to prepare a talk on a particular subject for a group of lawyers," she says.

Her biggest professional achievement, she says, is having reached the point in her career where she can take the kind of cases that truly make a difference in people's lives. "It makes me want to get up every morning and keep coming to work," she remarks.

**MLW**





# Christina E. Miller

**Chief, District Courts and Community Prosecutions  
Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law

With some 55 assistant district attorneys under her supervision, Christina E. Miller is responsible for ensuring that relatively new lawyers have a strong foundation of professional integrity before they move forward in their careers.

“What these ADAs learn in District Court is what they’re going to continue — the ethical ideals, the ideals of fairness and justice,” Miller says. “Those are going to be transferred to Superior Court, where the cases are a little weightier. We want to make sure we instill those principles early so they are transferred when people are promoted.”

As chief of District Courts and Community Prosecutions, Miller’s purview includes nine District and Municipal courts. In addition to supervising ADAs, she directs their training, reviews case decisions and strategies, contributes to office policy and generally “puts out a lot of fires.” She also handles her own caseload, primarily involving child pornography.

“I’ve always had a passion and interest in prosecuting child abuse cases, so this is my way to keep my hand in that,” she says.

A case she is especially proud of, which established caselaw, involved a pedophile on probation who fled to Boston and stayed off the court’s radar by remaining homeless, accessing the Internet at public libraries. Miller helped track down the man so that he could be caught in the act of soliciting a young girl. With scant law at the time on computer searches, prosecutors ended up appealing the case to the Supreme Judicial

Court, which decided in their favor.

“I think it made good law and it really clarified a lot that we now use when we’re evaluating search warrants for computers,” Miller says, adding that the defendant eventually was sentenced to 20 years in prison. “Arguing what you think the law should be and having the SJC adopt it is incredibly rewarding.”

Miller serves on the Boston Bar Association Council, co-chairs the Diversity and Inclusion Section and formerly co-chaired the Criminal Law Section. She also serves as a mentor for the Mayor’s Youth Council through the Boston Lawyers Group and for the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association.

“I love to see law students or new lawyers come into their own, and if I can be any part of their success or connecting them with someone who promotes their success, it makes me very happy,” she says.

Miller first became interested in the law as an undergraduate intern in the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office, where she worked with victims.

“It seemed like such amazing work to me to be that voice, to help someone through a system that is so foreign to them, to deal with issues that create such vulnerability in people’s lives and to do the right thing,” she remarks.

In her current role, she says she is thrilled to see the first ADAs she worked with now moving on to Superior Court and taking with them the lessons she instilled.

“I see that they’re successful and doing well and it gives me so much pride,” she says. **MLW**



## Katherine J. Michon

Named a  
**Top Woman of Law 2012 by  
*Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly.***

We congratulate and  
celebrate with Kathy this  
well-deserved recognition.

**Shilepsky | Hartley | Robb | Casey | Michon**

*Executive Advocacy, Employment Law and Litigation*





# Martha L. Minow

**Dean and Professor, Harvard Law School, Cambridge**

**Graduated:** Yale Law School

In her 31 years as a professor at Harvard Law School and three years as its dean, Martha L. Minow has dedicated her career to using the law to address the needs of society’s most disadvantaged citizens, regardless of whether their challenges are based on race, gender, disability or other issues.

“My goals then and now were always to try to use the law to advance access to education — equal education for all students — and to more generally address the needs of disadvantaged people,” she says.

The author of 14 books and almost 200 articles, Minow has established her expertise in human rights and advocacy for segments of society that historically have been the most vulnerable: children, racial minorities, people with disabilities, women and minority religious groups.

In addition to teaching at the law school, Minow is a lecturer at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education.

“I find it a great privilege to teach students who are smart and curious and raise new questions each year and to assist them in their own careers and their career aspirations,” she says. “I came to law school and pursued my own career with the hopes of using the law to address issues of injustice, and I find it rewarding to work with students who have that as a goal.”

From 2003 to 2006, Minow co-chaired the law school’s curricular reform committee, which undertook the school’s first major course reform in approximately 100 years. Asked by the then-dean to lead a review and analysis of the curriculum, Minow and her colleagues also conducted focus groups with

legal professionals and students.

“We did conclude that the world had changed dramatically enough to require a significant change,” she says, including adding three new required courses and re-configuring the rest of the curriculum.

Given the turbulent global economy and shifting structures of the legal profession, Minow says this remains a challenging period for both law schools and lawyers.

“The challenge for students right now is real,” she says. “There’s an obligation for people currently in the profession and for law schools to assist current students as they navigate this challenging environment.”

In 2009, President Barack Obama nominated Minow to the board of the Legal Services Corporation, which provides civil legal assistance to low-income individuals. She is vice-chair of the organization and co-chair of its Pro Bono Task Force. The nomination, which required U.S. Senate confirmation, was both an honor and a surprise, Minow says.

She has contributed her time and talents to a wide variety of organizations and social justice initiatives, including a five-year partnership with the U.S. Department of Education and the Center for Applied Special Technology. The program, designed to increase access to curriculums for students with disabilities, resulted in both legislative initiatives and voluntary national standards that broadened access.

Minow was also a member of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo, which examined human rights violations during the war in the Kosovo region. **MLW**



# Maureen Mulligan

**Partner, Ruberto Israel & Weiner, Boston**

**Graduated:** Boston College Law School

Maureen Mulligan learned when she was 12 that the law could be a powerful ally in achieving justice, and that she wanted to be a part of it.

Back in the sixth grade, Mulligan wanted to try out for Little League, but received the same rejection that young girls were hearing all over the country: Girls don’t play Little League. Undaunted, Mulligan sneaked an application and signed up anyway. When she showed up at the field, they tried to turn her away, but Mulligan insisted on being given a chance to try out.

Around this time, a lawyer spoke to Mulligan’s class for a career day, and she asked him for help with her Little League problem. He took on the case and helped her file a lawsuit at the same time protests were being lodged by aspiring young female baseball players in several other states. Finally, one of the cases broke through and girls were admitted to Little League.

“That was actually one of the reasons I decided to become a lawyer, because I was so impressed with the function and power of the court to resolve disputes,” Mulligan says.

Fast-forward, and Mulligan now handles complex commercial litigation and chairs her firm’s Privacy and Data Security Group. In recent years, she has grown her practice in Internet-based disputes: privacy and confidentiality violations, pirating of copyrighted materials and the like.

The law surrounding the Internet is constantly changing, which makes for a fascinating practice, she says: “We have these legal paradigms that work, pre-Internet, and post-Internet we find that sometimes the same

analysis doesn’t quite work. There are times when it needs to be tweaked and you’re breaking new ground.”

In one case, she helped a Fortune 500 company learn the identity of people who were anonymously posting confidential financial data on blogs and chat rooms. With a great deal of detective work, Mulligan was able to identify and shut down the poster.

She also strives to help younger women find their place in the profession, driven by the same passion for equal opportunity that she had as a young girl.

“It’s been a continuing theme for me, access for women,” she says. In addition to formal mentoring, she invites law students and young lawyers to events like the Women’s Bar Association annual gala, where they can make professional connections.

“It can be tough for young women to find their place in the litigation world,” she says. “Providing younger women with some support ... is really important.”

Currently, Mulligan serves on the Board of Bar Overseers. She recently concluded a term on the Boston Bar Association Council and chaired the American Bar Association’s Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section’s Corporate Governance Institute.

Looking back at her Little League victory, Mulligan says her exposure to an attorney that year, purely by chance, demonstrates the importance of lawyers going out into the community.

“It can really make a difference when you are talking to kids or young adults who may not have seen this as a profession,” she says. **MLW**





# Christine M. Netski

**Senior Partner, Sugarman, Rogers, Barshak & Cohen, Boston**

**Graduated:** Boston University School of Law

Christine M. Netski handles a wide variety of business, employment and products liability cases, but what keeps the work fascinating for her is the challenge of weaving complex information into stories that convey the unique experiences of people.

"I enjoy digging through information, working with witnesses, and trying to put together stories and themes that help explain what happened," Netski says. "There's a lot of nuance to that effort."

In a recent jury trial, she achieved an across-the-board win for a client facing a significant claim in a business dispute, at the same time winning a verdict on a counterclaim and recovering all of her client's attorneys' fees. It was a hard-fought case with a lot of human interest; Netski says it's experiences like that keep her work exciting.

She also values her relationships with clients and knowing that she is able to guide them through some of the most difficult challenges they will face in their businesses. The role of being a trusted advisor in a long-term professional relationship is a fulfilling one, she says.

Having joined her firm fresh out of law school, Netski found it such a good fit that she's stayed there ever since, giving her an opportunity to build a long history with clients.

"I really love getting to know different types of businesses and meeting so many interesting people who do things that I might not otherwise learn about," she says. "I'm constantly learning new things."

Netski became a member of Sugarman

Rogers' executive committee in 1999.

She traces her interest in the law to a summer program at Cornell, which confirmed her feeling that the field's distinctive approach to problem-solving would match her way of thinking. "I found it fascinating, and I decided right away to go to law school," she says.

Outside the office, Netski is a vice chair of the Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, which works toward systemic solutions to social justice issues. Among other initiatives, she is involved with the organization's public education efforts, including a bill designed to improve school discipline and prevent dropouts.

This year, Netski joined the Boston Bar Association Council, having previously served on several committees. One effort she was especially proud to participate in was the BBA Task Force on the Future of the Profession, charged with identifying the challenges young lawyers face in the current economy and recommending ways the bar association can assist them.

"Young lawyers ... are entering the profession at perhaps one of the most challenging times ever," she observes.

Netski also co-chairs the Women's Bar Association's Leadership Initiative, a group mentoring program designed to pair senior women with junior professionals to develop future leaders.

"Positive role models make all the difference," she says. "Seeing other women succeed and balance the demands of their personal and professional lives is really helpful." **MLW**



**Christine M. Netski**  
2012 Top Women of Law Award Honoree



We congratulate our partner and friend

# Christine M. Netski

**2012 Top Women of Law Award Recipient**

a natural leader, an enthusiastic mentor and a  
zealous advocate for her clients





# Janice C. Nigro

**Owner/Managing Partner, Nigro, Pettepit & Lucas, Wakefield**  
**Graduated:** Northeastern University School of Law

Janice C. Nigro and her brother Eugene are the second generation of attorneys to run their law practice, which their father started in 1945 after returning from World War II. Nigro has been with the firm since 1983, specializing in probate, trust and estate law.

Nigro put her deep knowledge to work when the state rolled out a major overhaul of the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code this year. She worked with the Massachusetts Bar Association and others to set up educational programs statewide to help lawyers, courts and citizens get ready for the changes.

“There was a lot of anxiety ... in adjusting to the new law and what it meant and what was the law,” she notes.

Nigro and a fellow attorney spearheaded a five-part CLE series on “MUPC Demystified” and a one-day course for more general practitioners.

In partnership with the MBA and Boston Bar Association, she also organized “Help Desks” in virtually every Probate Court in the state, staffed by volunteer lawyers who assist courts, attorneys and pro se litigants with the new laws.

She worked on the projects, all of them multi-year efforts, while serving as chair of the MBA’s Probate Section Council and co-chair of its MUPC Educational Committee.

“I just had a little piece of it, but I tried to do whatever I could to help,” she says. “This was really huge.”

Currently, Nigro serves on a committee

working to protect elders from abuse by strengthening Durable Power of Attorney, or POA, laws. Members are identifying weaknesses in the law that enable people to take advantage of elders through POAs, a problem she says is becoming more common. In the process, they are preparing a bill to propose new legislation.

Those who know Nigro say her practice is characterized not only by her expertise, but her compassion.

“The legal part is very intellectually interesting ... but the thing that drives me is the person behind the problem and wanting to solve the problem for them,” she says. “I always just try to give them my best, my everything.”

In estate planning, working with families concerned about the long-term effects of their decisions, she takes time to understand their concerns, hopes and family dynamics.

“I really try to get into the client’s head about how they feel about it,” Nigro says, describing her method as a holistic one that tailors a unique solution for each situation.

She credits her father with sparking her love for the law and helping her to appreciate its unique combination of intellectual stimulation and the capacity to help people. Now she is starting to see her firm’s second and third generation of clients.

“We have people where my father helped their grandparents, or their parents, and we’re helping the future generation, so it’s an amazing process.”

MLW

Top  
Women  
of law



# Wendy E. Parmet

**Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Professor of Law**  
**Northeastern University School of Law, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Harvard Law School

As a scholar, Wendy E. Parmet was determined never to be confined by the ivory tower. An author, researcher, educator and leading expert in public health law, she also continues to work on cases and advocate for expanded access to health care.

“I feel passionately about issues,” she says. “I think my work in the real world, so to speak, informs my scholarship, and I think my scholarship informs my work in the real world. I’m very privileged to have a job that allows me to go back and forth like that.”

For the last few years, Parmet has worked with Health Law Advocates, of which she is a founding board member, to maintain access to state-subsidized health care for about 44,000 legal immigrants. The state’s exclusion of them, prompted by a fiscal crisis, represented a dangerous erosion of the right to health care, she says.

“When you start chipping away at the groups who are the most vulnerable groups, you’re breaking down that social contract,” Parmet says.

The advocates prevailed before the Supreme Judicial Court, enabling their clients to continue receiving care.

Parmet also was co-counsel on *Bragdon v. Abbott* in 1998, the first AIDS/HIV case to go before the U.S. Supreme Court under the Americans With Disabilities Act. She remembers the case as exhilarating, representing a number of legal firsts. What mattered, Parmet

says, was not only winning the suit, but shining a light on the broader problem of discrimination within the health care system.

“It’s a teaching moment to prevent discrimination,” she says. “We’ve come, obviously, very far in HIV treatment and social understanding about HIV since the ’90s, but this was a period when discrimination was still quite rampant, so it felt like a very important case.”

Parmet says she’s always been passionate in her belief that law should help advance access to health care in a way that supports human rights. She targets her advocacy and her scholarship toward addressing those issues, using the law to improve public health through a wide range of legal interventions.

“I think of law as a very important social determinant of health,” she says. “It really affects people’s opportunities.”

The opportunity to participate in shaping public health law and raising awareness of the powerful role the law can play has been a gratifying one for Parmet. Contributing to her field of scholarship is one of the achievements she is most proud of, together with helping to establish Health Law Advocates and achieving victories in the courtroom on behalf of others.

Of course, she also takes pride in her students. “I hope I’ve played a small role in inspiring some of them to go on in their work.”

MLW



# Diane B. Patrick

**Partner, Ropes & Gray, Boston**

**Graduated:** Loyola Law School



When Diane B. Patrick became Massachusetts' First Lady in 2006, she didn't aspire to the limelight. But she quickly realized that her position as the wife of Gov. Deval L. Patrick gave her a unique platform to speak out on social issues.

"I decided to use it in a way that addressed the things I am most concerned about and most passionate about," she says.

Patrick, a survivor of abuse from a previous marriage, says one of her goals has been to remove the shame and silence surrounding domestic violence. Once she began sharing her story, she was encouraged by those who told her, "Lending your voice has ... allowed people to openly acknowledge what can be a stigmatizing situation. It's allowed people to step forward and ask for help. It's allowed people to say, 'This is not my fault. This isn't something that's relegated just to the poor community or people who don't have the wherewithal to find their way out.'"

Patrick also speaks frequently to communities of color to advocate for greater acceptance of mental health treatment, hoping to remove that stigma as well. In 2011, Patrick received the Whittier Street Health Center's inaugural Champion of Women's Health Award in recognition of her community work.

She has been equally successful in her law practice at Ropes & Gray, where she handles labor and employment matters, primarily for colleges, universities, health care entities and other nonprofit organizations. Her practice includes union management, collective bargaining agreements, arbitration, discrimination and sexual harassment matters, training and policy advising.

She loves her clients, she says, because they tend to be people-centered. "They're not making widgets, they're educating people, healing people."

Patrick's union-negotiating experience is a special point of pride, rooted in her belief that the best negotiations focus not on winners and losers, but ensuring each party gets at least part of what they want and that the relationship remains intact.

"I've never had a client that ended up being the subject of a strike," Patrick says. "I feel as though I contribute to the constructive relationships between employers and their employees and the unions that represent them."

For the last three years, she has chaired her firm's Diversity Committee, helping to broaden the scope of inclusiveness and attract the best talent through development and retention programs.

Patrick has served on numerous boards and committees, but one of her favorites is the Posse Foundation, which helps smart, talented young people get prepared for a top-tier college. The foundation partners with colleges and universities, which each provide four-year scholarships to 10 students. The foundation sees to it that the students attend college with a built-in support group — or "posse." In addition to serving on the national board and working with local offices, Patrick also works with mentees from the organization.

"Just opening a door can change a person's world and, in fact, change the world," she says. "There are so many young people getting left behind because that door of opportunity isn't open. That's where my greatest passion is." **MLW**

*Top  
Women  
of law*

# Cheryl B. Pinarchick

**Shareholder, Murphy & King, Boston**

**Graduated:** Syracuse University College of Law



The daughter of two public school teachers, Cheryl B. Pinarchick says she was destined to become either a teacher or a lawyer. She chose the law, but has found ways to fulfill her love for education through her pro bono work and community service.

Before joining Murphy & King, Pinarchick was a partner at Brown Rudnick, which presented her with the 2011 M. Robert Dushman Pro Bono Award for her work on the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation board. The foundation supports organizations working to improve inner-city education, so there was nothing better, Pinarchick says, than the opportunity to help allocate funding for a mission in which she believes.

Pinarchick also serves on the board of the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, which works closely with area public schools to provide kids with team-building activities and leadership development. Serving a population that is socio-economically diverse, the program has some students who have never been on the water before they visit the island.

"I love to be out there with these kids," Pinarchick says. "To help develop programs and see the looks on their faces and how far they come in a really short amount of time is tremendous. So that's where I get my teaching fix."

In her law practice at Murphy & King, where she chairs the employment law practice group, Pinarchick specializes in the resolution of complex business disputes, with an emphasis on employment law. With many

clients based in the United Kingdom, Pinarchick advises them on U.S. employment law and best practices, steering clients through an area filled with potential pitfalls. She also represents companies in discrimination complaints, counsels them through nationwide reductions in force, negotiates separation agreements and serves as trial counsel.

A former college athlete who played lacrosse and field hockey, Pinarchick says the adrenaline rush of walking into court is similar to walking onto the playing field. She still thrives in the courtroom, but as her career has evolved, she has come to enjoy equally her role as a counselor to her clients. Pinarchick invests significant time to understand her clients' goals and find the best ways to achieve them, without necessarily resorting to litigation.

"A good courtroom fight, at the end of day, is fun for me, but it's not always fun for my clients," she says. "But being able to work through a problem ... and come to some type of resolution short of litigation — when it works that's really the part that I enjoy the most."

She also emphasizes a strategy of prevention, helping clients think through the risks and benefits of their employment-related policies in order to avoid problems down the road.

Clients appreciate Pinarchick's balanced approach. She says the most consistent message she hears from referral clients is: "You were practical, pragmatic [and] had a good common-sense approach to things. But if you needed to get down and fight in the dirt, you would." **MLW**





# Holly M. Polglase

**Shareholder, Hermes, Netburn, O'Connor & Spearing, Boston**

**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

There are very few products Holly M. Polglase hasn't worked on in her career defending product manufacturers, distributors and retailers. She doesn't think she's ever had a case involving a hair dryer, but she's handled almost everything else, from toasters, medical devices, motor vehicles and refrigerators to televisions, power tools and an array of heavy equipment.

"I've had the kind of career where I've been lucky to have had a great variety of products that I've defended over the years," Polglase says.

After 23 years in the business, she still finds her work fascinating. She loves to see how things are made — and what can go wrong — which entails touring factories and learning from engineers. "One day I might find myself crawling all over a burned-out piece of heavy equipment, and the next day I'm putting on rubber gloves to look at an explanted hip device."

She also loves figuring out, like a detective, what actually happened in an accident, making her part attorney, part scientist and part investigator.

"You're piecing together an accident after the fact, when not everybody who is telling you what happened has a motivation to be truthful with you," she says.

Polglase's involvement with her clients can last for several years as cases work their way through the courts, so when she reaches a successful conclusion after all that time, it is deeply satisfying, she says.

She moved to Hermes, Netburn, O'Connor & Spearing last year and has since enjoyed the challenge of being more involved

in the business side of the firm, in addition to her practice. All in all, she says, "I love it."

Polglase recently served as president of the Massachusetts Defense Lawyers Association and has held numerous positions with the American and Massachusetts bar associations and other organizations. She also spent a term on the Joint Bar Committee on Judicial Nominations.

Her goal is to leave each organization in better shape than she found it, whether that means putting finances in order, increasing member communications or raising the quality of events, she says.

"What I always have tried to do is to look at an organization and say, 'How can we serve the constituency better?'" she says. "My goal is not just to pass through these organizations and collect titles."

Mentoring also is important to Polglase. She hasn't forgotten what it's like to be a new attorney taking the first steps in a career that can often feel overwhelming. When she sees that familiar look on the faces of young lawyers, wondering how they're going to make it, she goes out of her way to reassure them that, eventually, they'll figure it out.

"Having a personal life on top of being on the plane a couple times a week and just the sheer demands on your time is very difficult, and it takes a lot of managing over the years," she says.

Polglase also seeks to improve collegiality among attorneys no matter what side of the aisle they're on.

"We're all part of a very important system in our democracy," she says. **MLW**



# Rebecca G. Pontikes

**Owner, Pontikes Law, Boston**

**Graduated:** University of Michigan Law School

Working as a solo practitioner is a good fit for Rebecca Pontikes, who recognized early on that she wanted to choose the kinds of cases she took on and decide for herself how to handle them.

"I never have viewed myself as an entrepreneur, but ... it made the most sense to do that by working for myself," she says.

Pontikes had been working mostly independently for a few years when she officially opened Pontikes Law in 2011. She now has the experience of serving as "chief cook and bottle washer" and, most importantly, pursuing the discrimination and other employment law cases she is passionate about.

She says she has a particularly low tolerance for sexual discrimination and discrimination against employees trying to balance work and family responsibilities. "That just gets me at the core," she says. "If I see someone abusing their power, and I think that happens a lot in the workplace ... that's the kind of case I want to take on."

One of her clients, for example, filed a suit against his former law firm employer, claiming he was retaliated against for taking paternity leave and being the primary caretaker of his children. She also represented a woman who faced discrimination when she tried to rejoin the workforce after having children.

Pontikes doesn't shy away from unpopular cases, a prominent defendant or situations where she's likely to be the sole plaintiff's at-

torney facing a full table of opposing counsel. Recognizing that solitude can plague some solos, however, she makes it a point to partner with other attorneys when it makes sense.

"Two people can obviously get a lot more done than one person can, so I've found it to be important to work with my colleagues and to co-counsel," she says. "Collaboration is important, especially for someone who does the kind of work I do."

Pontikes never considered corporate law or representing big business because, she says, "Those people don't need me. I wanted to look for the people that needed me."

What keeps her coming to work every day, Pontikes says, is the notion that somewhere out there, bad things are happening to good people, and she wants to stay in the fight.

"It's my key belief that ... this has got to be done and I'm going to be one of the ones to do it: helping employees, helping them combat things that happen to them and being an advocate," she says.

Speaking of a case in which she represented a woman who had been sexually assaulted, Pontikes says that at the end of it, she thought to herself: "This is why I became a lawyer, to help women like this in these situations, to make the world better, one case at a time."

The best part about running her own firm is that Pontikes can, as she describes it, practice within her values. "I love what I do, even on the bad days," she says. **MLW**



# Mala M. Rafik

Partner, Rosenfeld, Rafik & Sullivan, Boston

Graduated: Northeastern University School of Law



Mala M. Rafik firmly believes she has the best job in the world, representing clients who have been denied disability and health insurance benefits.

“When you graduate law school, all you want to do is save the world,” she says. “Making money and doing that don’t always go hand in hand, but we’ve been able to run our law firm as a private firm doing public interest work.”

The firm’s clients are disabled or chronically ill, unable to obtain the health care or disability benefits they need. “It’s a real privilege to be part of people’s lives at this time. On my worst days, that’s one thing I don’t ever forget, because people really have to open up to you,” Rafik says. “It’s an enormous responsibility, but even more than that, it’s an enormous privilege.”

The cases that stand out for her are often the smaller ones, like the Maine woman in her 60s with a severe cognitive disability who was forced to move when her insurance company cut her benefits. Those benefits, which Rafik was able to regain, amounted to just \$285 per month, but had a great impact on the woman’s well-being.

“For me, those are the really important cases and those people are the ones where you feel like you make an enormous difference,” Rafik says. “A lot of my clients are like that.”

In what has become a niche part of her practice, Rafik represents several people who are not only dealing with chronic Lyme disease, but are caught in the middle of a med-

ical debate over whether it is a legitimate illness, which means they often must fight for coverage. She has emerged as a leader in advocating for such patients to receive appropriate treatment and disability benefits for a disease that can be debilitating, threatening both health and livelihood. Recently, Rafik was asked to put together the first legal panel ever held at the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society conference.

“I feel like the debate within the medical community will resolve itself, but in the meantime, people aren’t getting the disability benefits and the health care they need in so many states,” she says.

Rafik has served on the Boston Bar Association Council and chaired both the American Bar Association Health and Disability Law General Committee and the American Association for Justice Insurance Section. She currently serves on the boards of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Health Law Advocates, Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Massachusetts Correctional Legal Services.

She also has testified before the Department of Labor’s ERISA Advisory Council on the effects on both individual and families from long-term disability benefits denial.

Praising her two partners with helping to build a fun, visionary practice, Rafik says, “I can honestly say that when I walk in the door, I’m happy to be here. It’s a good example of what the law should be like.” **MLW**

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WE PROUDLY CONGRATULATE  
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## HOLLY M. POLGLASE

ON BEING NAMED  
ONE OF THE  
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# Amy B. Royal

**Founding Partner, Royal, Northampton**  
**Graduated:** Albany Law School of Union University

Amy B. Royal took a gamble when she decided to open her own law practice in 2008, but she decided that the risk was worth it. “I really had this vision of creating a law firm that would mentor and support women attorneys, especially young women attorneys as they’re coming out of law school.”

The germ of that vision came from an MIT study about the large numbers of women leaving private practice, or abandoning the law altogether, often because of work-life balance issues. Royal was concerned about the consequences of the trend, including a shortened pipeline of female attorneys who could become judges and assume other leading roles. She envisioned creating a kind of “old girls network” that would offer women the same mentoring and professional opportunities that are readily available to men.

Royal also supports the flexibility created by technology, which enables lawyers to work remotely and can make it easier to meet the demands of both work and home.

“A lot of law firms are very traditional and haven’t embraced that, so I’m trying to embrace that with the hope that it will help younger women want to remain in private practice,” she says.

Becoming a business owner, in addition to an attorney, has been a great learning opportunity, Royal says. One of the first lessons she learned is that both roles are a great fit for her.

“I’ve realized that I love being a business person and it is entirely different than being a practitioner,” she says. “Since we’re so specialized, we have to be pounding the pavement even more, but I have enjoyed the experience in running my own business.”

Her firm now has nine attorneys, including Royal, who heads the litigation group.

Working in management-side labor and employment law, Royal said one of the best parts of her practice is developing long-term relationships with clients.

“I know their operations inside and out, and I’ve learned a lot about different organizations, which has been interesting,” she says.

In her pro bono work, Royal helps nonprofits and other organizations gain the benefits of certification through the State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance, which she has attained for her own firm. The certification can provide a leg up in applying for grants and obtaining state funding and give an advantage to private companies that are government contractors.

Starting this fall, Royal will chair the board of the United Way of Hampshire County, a service role she is eager to take on.

“This is such a great organization that really does have an impact on the communities that we live in,” she says.

Before starting her practice, Royal worked as an assistant attorney general handling civil litigation and in a boutique firm. **MLW**



# Carol A. Starkey

**Partner, Conn, Kavanaugh, Rosenthal, Peisch & Ford, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

With 13 years of experience as a prosecutor and 10 years as a defense lawyer, Carol A. Starkey has a unique perspective on the practice of law. The common thread to her career, however, is her deep belief in a fair, just process.

“I’ve always seen the law as offering one of the most significant means of participating in our great experiment of democracy,” she says.

In her previous position as chief of the Economic Crimes Division at the Attorney General’s Office, Starkey handled public corruption and complex financial crimes, trying some of the unit’s largest cases. She loved every minute of being a prosecutor, particularly the ability to use the power of the government to not only enforce the law, but also to prevent destructive crimes that harm communities.

In transitioning to private practice, she saw first-hand how that same power creates a need for a strong defense.

Starkey specializes in white-collar criminal and regulatory defense and commercial litigation. As the attorney who now stands between the government and her clients, her responsibilities are as significant as they were in the prosecutor’s chair, she says.

“There is nothing like sitting across from a client who is looking to you to salvage their entire business, or to advocate for a person who’s been charged with a crime,” Starkey says. “It expanded my understanding of how important it is, this work we do as lawyers. Helping people make sure their rights are observed and getting them the best possible chance at justice that our system can afford

is a great honor.”

Starkey serves on the Massachusetts Bar Association’s Joint Bar Committee for Judicial Appointments, which she will chair this fall, and she is vice chair of the International Association of Defense Counsel’s White Collar Defense & Investigations Committee. Also an active member of the Boston Bar Association, Starkey has served on the council, co-chaired the Diversity and Inclusion Section, and helped to implement BBA mentoring programs.

“Helping young lawyers maintain their own path while maintaining the integrity of our profession is something we’re all obligated to do,” she says.

Starkey takes satisfaction in winning cases for her clients, but says her work outside her practice is especially gratifying. She takes special pride in helping to get the BBAs mentoring program off the ground and in her work on the Joint Bar Committee.

“I’ve tried to focus my volunteer work in those two areas: helping young lawyers and law students, and impacting the administration of justice by assisting in choosing those going to the bench, to help ensure the integrity of the system,” she says.

Her desire to make a difference can be traced to her father, a physician who complemented his traditional practice by providing medical care to prison inmates, she says.

“He instilled in me that same kind of ethos — of needing to give back in some fashion and working within the system to help those who are not necessarily getting the benefits of the system.” **MLW**



# Emily S. Starr

**Partner, Starr Vander Linden, Fitchburg**

**Graduated:** Boston University School of Law



OSBORNE DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHY

When Emily S. Starr and Susan Levin wrote an article about Medicaid planning for Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly in the early 1980s, they tapped into an issue many attorneys were facing, most with little guidance.

Having worked in legal services before co-founding her firm in 1981, Starr was familiar with public benefits programs and their strict eligibility rules, which the article discussed.

“From the day that article was published, my phone didn’t stop ringing because no one had published this before,” she says. “There was not a field called elder law. It was just a problem.”

That, in part, is how Starr came to develop her practice in elder law, although it took several years before it became an established practice area. Around the same time, she joined forces with a new organization that eventually became the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys.

Now, Starr is the managing partner of her firm’s elder, disability and estate planning group, focusing on Medicaid and estate planning, special needs trusts, guardianship and probate.

Helping to develop a new area of law has been a rewarding experience, Starr says. She spoke at the first Massachusetts Alzheimer’s Association meeting and co-edited a three-volume treatise that became a leading text in state elder law. In addition, for more than two decades, she co-chaired an elder law CLE program on estate planning for Medicaid coverage of nursing home and long-term health care.

“I enjoy being able to help other lawyers

develop expertise in this area,” she says.

Starr also has expertise in trust administration for individuals with disabilities and special needs, counseling parents, for example, on the best ways to protect their children.

“Families of older people ... who are impaired and families who have disabled children can be some of the most amazing and inspiring people, because they somehow manage to give of themselves to their family members in ways that you don’t see very often,” Starr says.

In 2007, the Theresa Foundation presented Starr with its Award for Community Service, and in 2009 she received the Scholar-Mentor Award from Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education. She serves on the national board and is a fellow of the Massachusetts chapter of NAELA, and she is a member of the Board of Editors for the NAELA Journal.

Starr says she considers herself fortunate to truly like her area of practice — not something every lawyer can say, she notes.

“I enjoy helping people figure out how to address a problem and hopefully address it successfully. I think people are very thankful when you can come up with a solution,” she says.

In particular, working at the forefront of a new field of law, both with clients and in public policy advocacy, was immensely rewarding.

“It was great. We used to get together all the time and talk about what we were doing. We developed our expertise as a group,” she says. “What was exciting was just learning together what we were doing and how to approach it.”

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*Top Women of law*

# Deborah H. Thomson

**Attorney, The PASS Group, Boston**

**Graduated:** The National Law Center at George Washington University



Many of the people who benefit from Deborah H. Thomson’s tireless advocacy will never meet her, but their well-being, health and quality of life have been significantly improved through her efforts.

An elder law attorney for most of her career, for the last 12 years Thomson has used her legal expertise to improve policies, regulations and legislation affecting elders across the state. As an attorney for The PASS Group, Thomson helps nonprofit organizations achieve social and economic change through state-level lobbying and advocacy.

“Elders are frequently an underserved demographic and one that does not always get the attention it needs,” Thomson says. “I think people don’t understand the needs that are out there with seniors. There’s a very large percentage of seniors in Massachusetts who meet the poverty level.”

She has worked to develop health care laws, improve assisted living certification standards, preserve adult day health services and numerous other initiatives designed to improve the well-being, financial security and quality of life of elders.

Her work is highly focused on improving policies and regulations that have a significant impact on elders’ day-to-day lives, particularly when it comes to preventing them from impoverishment.

“Many seniors are living in constrained financial circumstances. They have health problems that are not adequately addressed. There are many ways this work can benefit elders, and that’s what keeps me going.”

In one initiative, Thomson fought to increase the allowance for the personal needs of nursing

home residents. For years, she says, residents were allowed just \$60 per month to pay for everything Medicaid didn’t cover, such as clothing, telephone bills and haircuts. After a lengthy effort, advocates finally got the monthly allowance raised to \$72. Now, they are fighting for an annual, automatic cost-of-living adjustment.

She also worked with a coalition to ensure that Medicaid eligibility for same-sex couples, whether elders or not, is equal to that of heterosexual couples.

The challenge to her work is communicating with state legislators on complex topics, particularly in a time of scarce resources. A large part of her role is taking highly specialized, technical programs and presenting them in a way that’s understandable to lawmakers who don’t have a background in elder law.

Before joining The PASS Group, Thomson practiced at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, which concentrates on poverty issues and underserved populations. Much of Thomson’s work involved advocating for elders on benefits issues to ensure they would have adequate health care and would not become impoverished.

She also served as the director of public policy for the Alzheimer’s Association in Massachusetts, identifying and developing policy and legislation that would benefit people and families dealing with dementia.

Thomson belongs to numerous state and federal task forces and committees dealing with health and elder policy issues.

“This generation of elders, in particular, has really contributed selflessly to the benefits we enjoy as Americans, and they deserve to be treated well,” she says.

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# Cynthia J. Walden

**Principal, Fish & Richardson, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Duke University School of Law

Cynthia J. Walden’s path to the law wasn’t a conventional one, but her evident passion for her work makes it clear that she landed in the right place.

After graduating with an art degree, Walden went to BBDO advertising agency in New York, working in account management between clients, on one hand, and “creatives” on the other. It wasn’t the ads that interested her, but the behind-the-scenes legal work, which exposed her to trademark and copyright law and spurred her decision to attend law school.

Walden now represents clients at every stage of the process, from ensuring that trademarks for new companies or products are not already in the marketplace, to making a client’s case at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, to exercising judgment about whether a certain mark will create legal issues.

“The creative process is very much a part of what I do,” she says. “It’s a lot of putting together these arguments about what commercial impression is, who the consumers are, and whether there is overlap, which to me is a fun challenge.”

She also helps companies protect their brands, which is increasingly complicated in the Internet and global commerce era. With many clients doing business overseas, Walden advises them on best practices for countries whose laws and cultures may not support trademark protection.

In 2007, Walden became the first woman to head her firm’s trademark and copyright practice group, which consists of approximately 35 attorneys. Under her leadership, the firm has been named the Top Trademark Law

Firm by World Trademark Review for the past two years. In 2011, it received a National Tier 1 ranking in trademark law in the U.S. News Media Group and Best Lawyers survey.

As the recession cut into many clients’ budgets for managing their intellectual property, Walden and her team have had to find new ways to serve clients, including alternative billing arrangements and additional value deliverables. Her firm offers a client-dedicated portal that is available 24-7, which Walden has rolled out more aggressively in the last few years. She also has implemented a series of webinars — which turned out to be a great success — to educate clients about cutting-edge issues and new legal developments in the field.

In her pro bono work, Walden participates in the firm’s partnership with MassChallenge, which supports early-stage entrepreneurs. She devotes a significant amount of time to the International Trademark Association, serving on the Harmonization of Trademark Law and Practice Committee and helping to plan annual meetings. For several years, Walden has helped to coordinate the association’s annual Saul Lefkowitz Moot Court Competition, in which more than 80 law schools participate.

Walden also has been a longtime advisor on trademark, copyright, licensing and domain name issues to Pro Bono Net, which provides resources for attorneys serving low-income clients.

“Trademarks and brands are so powerful and such a valuable asset to companies,” Walden says. “It’s a privilege to work with local, national and global companies trying to protect those assets.”

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*Top  
Women  
of law*



# Maria C. Walsh

**Mediator and Arbitrator, JAMS — The Resolution Experts, Boston**  
**Graduated:** New York University School of Law

Maria C. Walsh’s first inspiration to practice law came from her grandfather, an attorney who often took her along to the Suffolk County Courthouse.

“I didn’t really understand half of what was going on, but I understood that people were getting help, and I understood enough to know that I’d like to help people,” she says.

She began doing so as a trial attorney and then as chairperson of the Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission. Along the way, Walsh came to believe most cases could be effectively resolved through settlement or mediation.

“I began to think about a different way to administer justice that involves parties coming to their own decisions about what they could or couldn’t live with,” she says. “It’s really about analyzing the risks of litigation, eliminating the transaction costs of litigation and then crafting a solution that, while not perfect, is better than the alternatives.”

Walsh has been affiliated with JAMS since 2000. She specializes in resolving matters that tend to be high-stakes and often emotional, such as employment disputes and intellectual property claims.

“There’s a lot of instant gratification when the parties resolve, because the emotions are frequently so high,” she says.

Two strategies enable her to facilitate resolutions for tough disputes: assuming that claims on both sides have some degree of legitimacy and that both sides genuinely want to settle if the resolution makes sense. That, combined with her own stubbornness, she says, gets her most of the way toward a solution.

“After that, I just take it as a personal chal-

lenge to try and figure out how we can find some solution that makes more sense than going to trial,” she says.

One of her most satisfying mediations was of a dispute involving ERISA claims brought by the U.S. Department of Labor against fiduciaries, including one in bankruptcy. The settlement yielded full recovery by 1,400 pension plans. Describing the case as a “complicated game of three-dimensional chess,” Walsh says “the solution was a very thoughtful and creative and innovative solution that became a model for similar disputes and conflicts throughout the country.”

Walsh also enjoys her appointment as Special Master for Asbestos Litigation in Superior Court. With 300 to 400 cases annually, each involving dozens of defendants and claims, she tries to help attorneys resolve the cases without going to trial.

“If those had to be tried in order to resolve them, we wouldn’t actually have a civil trial system available for anything else,” she says. “I take a lot of satisfaction in that.”

Informally, Walsh has become a pro bono advisor to Boston’s Cape Verdean community, largely through word of mouth. She helps residents, many of whom are unfamiliar with English, navigate difficulties involving landlords, employers or health care providers.

Walsh has also organized and co-edited “A Judicial Guide to Labor and Employment Law” and “Ensuring Equal Justice: Addressing Cultural and Linguistic Differences in the Courts of Massachusetts,” the latter having been recognized by the American Bar Association and the National Center for State Courts.

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# Kimberly E. Winter

**Partner, White, Freeman & Winter, Weston**  
**Graduated: Suffolk University Law School**

While building her practice at the intersection of law and health care, one of Kimberly E. Winter's priorities is to extend a hand to younger attorneys trying to find their way. A longtime board member for the Women's Bar Association, Winter is a mentor for its Women's Leadership Initiative.

While she has mentored male attorneys, too, Winter feels a special sense of obligation to help women.

"I'm alarmed when I see that so many women fall out of the profession, particularly in leadership roles and litigation roles, and I like to try to ... help people see that they can stick with it," she says.

For the last 15 years, she has also lent her support to women's political campaigns, from Attorney General Martha Coakley to state senators. It's something she believes is important for all women to do.

"I particularly feel strongly that we need to learn to make financial contributions," Winter says. "I think that for a long time, women didn't do that well or maybe didn't understand the importance of it, and it's critical."

In her practice, Winter specializes in medical malpractice matters, mostly representing plaintiffs, and professional licensure cases. Before becoming an attorney, Winter worked as a registered nurse with a specialty certification in intensive care. While that training gives her familiarity with the medical terminology in her cases, she believes her biggest advantage is knowing how the health care system works.

"I know when something should be writ-

ten down and documented a certain way, so if I see it differently, it really helps me because I know something's missing," she says.

It is deeply satisfying to help clients through extremely difficult circumstances, she says, especially when their injuries require a high level of medical care.

"In a couple of cases, I think it made the difference between what I think would have been a very difficult life because of their injuries to getting them sufficient help where they actually have a really good quality of life," she says.

Her licensing work also provides an opportunity to help professionals, whether they are facing a licensing board when they shouldn't be or they need help to survive professional censure and rebuild their careers.

"I can say that what I did really made a big difference for them, and I like that," Winter says.

Winter is a past president of the Massachusetts Academy of Trial Attorneys and has held several positions with state and national bar associations.

One of her accomplishments, which will needle every attorney who spent months prepping for the LSAT, is that Winter took the test more or less spontaneously when she was considering leaving her nursing career. She met someone at a conference who mentioned that the LSAT was being offered the following week and she could take it as a walk-in. She did, and did well.

"I refer to myself as the accidental lawyer," she says.

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Fish & Richardson is proud to  
congratulate our friend and colleague,  
Cynthia Walden, for her  
2012 Top Women of Law honor.

You inspire us!



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# Doreen M. Zankowski

**Partner, Saul Ewing, Boston**  
**Graduated:** Suffolk University Law School

Talk to Doreen M. Zankowski about her practice in construction, engineering, real estate and environmental law, and you're likely to hear a certain phrase at least once: "a lot of moving parts."

A veteran of the Big Dig, a Boston Harbor cleanup and countless construction projects from high schools to hospitals, Zankowski is comfortable in the middle of complex projects that involve big dollars, high profiles and many, many pieces.

She also doesn't seem to mind working in a field that remains noticeably male-dominated. In fact, she says, "that gives me an extra challenge."

"What I like about construction engineering is you can see what you've done," Zankowski says. "When I go through the tunnel, I can say, 'I had a giant claim on this section of tunnel right here.' ... I get to see the high school I helped to get built. You can see it, touch it, you're part of it. It's a lot of fun."

Zankowski works closely with her clients to develop projects, negotiate complex contracts and navigate regulatory processes, and she represents them in prosecutions and disputes. Often, her role is to help the client keep projects on track while avoiding claims, a constant risk with such technical projects.

She always wanted to be an attorney, but initially worked for an international engineering and construction company after she graduated from college. Zankowski made such a good impression that her boss offered to pay for her to attend law school, which she did — coming back to serve as the company's in-house counsel. She held two other posi-

tions before Saul Ewing recruited her to help grow its Boston office.

Her background in engineering, construction and environmental infrastructure gives her a serious leg up when it comes to helping her clients. As does her sheer joy in the work. "I love what I do," she says.

In a significant nod to her expertise, Zankowski was chosen to serve as arbitrator in a \$50 million, multi-party claim in New York. After months of hearings, dozens of witnesses and thousands of documents, she was able to reach a resolution. Her knowledge enabled her to execute her responsibility particularly well, asking questions of witnesses and ensuring the process got to the crux of the matter.

In her pro bono work, Zankowski represents a teenager who is facing criminal charges that, she says, accuse him falsely of calling in a bomb threat to a teacher. In addition to representing him at his trial this fall, she has arranged for him to attend another school and receive tutors during his suspension.

She also has given more than 600 hours to lead a local yacht club through a major capital project, resolving permit problems, handling construction bidding, negotiating contracts and overseeing the project.

Zankowski is active in several bar association and professional organizations, and she is the director of philanthropic development for Regis College, her alma mater. Knowing her love for construction projects, the board convinced her to take on the position, she jokes, by telling her: "If we raise money, we can build things!"

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We are proud of our partner,  
**Doreen M. Zankowski, Esq.**  
for earning the distinction that those of us who work closely  
with her know she richly deserves.



Congratulations on being named a *Top Women of the Law* honoree.

**Saul Ewing**  
LLP

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