



Washington's Most Influential Women Lawyers

In a profession still dominated by men, these power players have taken a sledgehammer to the glass ceiling to grab their place among the elite of the Washington bar.

June 28, 2010

A time will arrive, perhaps soon, when singling out lawyers by gender will seem wholly unnecessary. Unfortunately, we're not there yet. Don't buy it? Try answering this question: How many major law firms can you name that are run by women — ditto practice groups, corporate law departments, advocacy groups, public agencies? Some of them? Certainly. Half? Not even close. Barriers have fallen and continue to do so, and the lawyers on our list of Washington's Most Influential Women have career paths that any lawyer — male or female — would envy. These are power players, and they were selected by the editors of *The National Law Journal* for work that places them in an elite tier. We are recognizing their work, their influence and the fact that they may have had to work a bit harder than many of their male colleagues to get where they are today. Here's to the day when that won't be necessary. — *David L. Brown, editor in chief*



Nan Aron

Alliance for Justice

Confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan start this week, and Nan Aron, president of the left-leaning Alliance for Justice, is thinking about strategy. The group will put what Aron described as public service announcements on YouTube to "shed light on the Court's current corporate bias." Aron said the Alliance for Justice is hoping to take advantage of the spotlight that confirmation hearings shine on the role of the Supreme Court. The group has also sent sample questions to senators in hopes that they'll highlight the same issue of corporate bias in their remarks. In other words, Aron is locked and loaded for another round in the judicial confirmation wars — a fight in which she has played a leading role for more than 30 years. "People understand that she will be influential because she does have access to people around town, and people take what she has to say seriously," said William Yeomans, a former legal director of the Alliance for Justice who still consults for the group. Yeomans, who was chief counsel to the late Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said that Kennedy thought highly of Aron, adding that "so much of Nan's effectiveness occurs in conversations, in meetings, in being persuasive with people not necessarily with the public spotlight on." — *Carrie Levine*



Charlene Barshefsky

Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr

As a top international trade lawyer, Charlene Barshefsky routinely negotiates deals in countries where women are limited to subordinate jobs. But gender discrimination has "never been an issue for me," she said. "I think women actually have an advantage in negotiations. We tend to be highly intuitive, and we listen better." A partner at Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr, Barshefsky served as U.S. trade representative from 1997 to 2001. She's best known as the principal negotiator of the agreement that paved the way for China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. Much of her work today involves Asia. She represents a half-dozen high tech companies, including Google Inc., Cisco Systems Inc. and Hewlett-Packard Co., on issues of government regulation, standards setting and market access in Asia. She's also counsel to Boeing Co. in its massive WTO dispute with Airbus SAS. On June 30, the WTO will release the public version of a decision favoring Boeing in the first of two cases. And Barshefsky is representing the Alliance for Clean Technology Innovation in global climate change talks. Coalition members include 3M Co., L'Air Liquide S.A., Alstom, Exxon Mobil Corp., General Electric Co., Microsoft Corp., Philips Electronics N.V. and Siemens A.G. She also serves on the boards of directors of American Express Co., Estée Lauder Co., Intel Corp. and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. — *Jenna Greene*



Elise Bean

U.S. Senate

If not for Elise Bean and her staff, Fabrice Tourre might be just a name on a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission complaint. Instead, the Goldman Sachs vice president, who called himself "Fabulous Fab" in swaggering e-mails, was broadcast on televisions nationwide in April as a star witness before the U.S. Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Bean is the subcommittee's Democratic staff director and chief counsel, leading a team of Capitol Hill's top investigators. The subcommittee has a storied history, originating under Sen. Harry Truman when he was investigating World War II profiteering. In recent years, Bean's staff has looked into commodities trading, money laundering, offshore tax evasion and foreign corruption. A message from them is enough to ruin the day of any corporate lawyer. "People don't like to get calls from us," Bean said, "but we view ourselves as people who try to do a thorough, careful job." Sometimes, that means investigations take a year or more. And when a company chooses not to cooperate, the subcommittee can issue subpoenas. Bean has worked for the subcommittee's chairman, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), since 1985 and has served as the Democratic staff director since 2003. —

David Ingram



Beth Brinkmann, Christine Varney

U.S. Department of Justice

Beth Brinkmann and Christine Varney stood at the peak of their practice at elite law firms when they agreed to join the U.S. Justice Department in April 2009 — Varney as head of the Antitrust Division and Brinkmann as chief of the Civil Division's appellate section. "At heart, there's nothing like government service," said Varney, a former partner at (then) Hogan & Hartson who had also served as a commissioner at the Federal Trade Commission.

As assistant attorney general for the 369-lawyer Antitrust Division, Varney said she relishes the chance to be "at the front lines of really great issues in an operational way." Among them: crafting new horizontal merger guidelines and conducting the first-ever workshop series on competition in agriculture. The division on her watch has also filed suit to undo the merger of Dean Foods and Foremost Dairy, compelled Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Michigan to abandon its

proposed purchase of Physicians Health Plan of Mid-Michigan, and imposed conditions on the merger of Ticketmaster and Live Nation Inc.

Brinkmann, one of the top appellate advocates in the country, came to Justice from Morrison & Foerster, where she led the 45-lawyer appellate practice group. She joined the firm in 2002 after serving as an assistant to the solicitor general for nine years, and she has argued 24 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. As deputy assistant attorney general, she isn't sitting back. Earlier this month, the en banc U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled for the government in a defamation suit that Brinkmann had argued. Assistant Attorney General Tony West of the Civil Division, also a former Morrison & Foerster partner, brought Brinkmann on board. "For me, the question was never whether Beth was the best person for the job — she clearly was — but whether I could convince her to take it," West said. — *Jenna Greene and Mike Scarcella*



Robin Conrad, Lisa Rickard

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

When it comes to guiding the legal agenda for business, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce exercises a strong hand. Its National Chamber Litigation Center weighed in on 16 cases during the current U.S. Supreme Court term and has so far declared victory in eight. Its U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform works to shape the legal climate in the United States and overseas. The institute just launched a Web site warning foreign policymakers about the dangers of American-style class actions. Both entities are led by women: Robin Conrad, executive vice president of the litigation center, and Lisa Rickard, executive vice president of the Chamber and president of the Institute. Conrad, who has run the center since 2007 and worked there since 1983, is the gatekeeper for business cases, especially at the appellate level, said Supreme Court advocate Carter Phillips of Sidley Austin. "She's very selective in her assessment of when to use the resources of the Chamber," he said. Conrad said she knows the center's efforts have an impact when justices cite the Chamber's briefs during oral argument or in decisions, as happened in the Citizens United campaign finance ruling. The center's influence also comes from its behind-the-scenes moot court program, in which advocates practice their case. "If we have achieved our objective, they will not be asked a question [in the high court] they haven't been asked before," Conrad said. Rickard, a former partner at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, focuses on pro-business lobbying and outreach at the federal and state levels, as well as abroad. "The enactment of the Class Action Fairness Act has really made a tremendous difference" to businesses facing litigation, she said. — *Carrie Levine*



Marianna Dyson

Miller & Chevalier

Miller & Chevalier head Marianna Dyson doesn't apologize for her firm's independent streak. By going it alone, she believes, the 100-lawyer firm has seen more success than if it had joined with a larger shop. Not that they haven't had offers. Dyson said that, since she took over as chairwoman of the executive committee in 2007, the firm has been approached by several larger firms. Miller & Chevalier appeared ripe for the picking after partner defections in 2006 and 2007 left its international trade practice in tatters. "We were being told all the time that there was no way we could survive," Dyson said. But the partners decided to stick it out, focusing on their key practices (tax, employee benefits, litigation and government affairs). She said that decision has been met with "enthusiastic" client support. "They like the idea of having a smaller, more flexible firm working for them," Dyson said. Credit for the firm's turnaround must also go to the driving force that is Dyson herself. She keeps an eye on morale, not afraid to use things as basic as food and candy to lift spirits. Dyson said the firm is working on a succession plan to preserve the "core of the firm's culture." In classic Dyson speak, she said, "We have stuck to our knitting so far, and it's really paid off." — *Jeff Jeffrey*



Deborah Feinstein

Arnold & Porter

When it comes to winning antitrust approval of megadeals, companies ranging from General Electric Co. to PepsiCo Inc. to AMC Theatres have turned to Deborah Feinstein for help. "When you do merger work, you're always doing what the company is most excited about," said Feinstein, a partner at Arnold & Porter. "You feel you're building something." Feinstein is currently serving as a lead member of the team representing General Electric in the \$30 billion Comcast-NBC Universal joint venture pending before the Justice Department. "She's smart, efficient and insightful," co-counsel and colleague William Baer said. "She can juggle an extremely large number of important matters and do them all well." Feinstein's juggling skills have been put to the test of late. She's also currently representing Air Products and Chemicals Inc. in its \$5.1 billion hostile takeover bid for Airgas Inc. Earlier this year, she assisted Pepsi in winning Federal Trade Commission approval of its \$7.8 billion acquisition of two bottlers.

Another recent deal involved AMC and Kerasotes Showplace Theatres. The transaction required divestitures, but Feinstein was able to strike a deal with the Justice Department in less than five months, allowing the companies to close before the Memorial Day blockbuster weekend. — *Jenna Greene*



Alice Fisher

Latham & Watkins

When Alice Fisher rejoined Latham & Watkins in 2008, the firm was banking on her experience at the U.S. Justice Department to prepare her for a new challenge. Fisher had led the Criminal Division for three years as assistant attorney general, making her name as an anti-corruption crusader — from Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) investigations to the Jack Abramoff lobbying prosecution. She chaired the National Procurement Fraud Task Force and oversaw Medicare fraud initiatives. Fisher's one-time department mentor, Michael Chertoff, said she handled work of "exceptional breadth" at Justice. "Her portfolio included some of the most sophisticated and challenging issues that any lawyer in government has ever faced," said Chertoff, senior of counsel to Covington & Burling. Latham brought Fisher back to co-chair the white-collar and government investigations practice group. She had been a litigation partner at the firm between 2003 and 2005 and during 2001. Her work these days is 85% on the criminal side, including government and internal investigations. She advises clients in industries from health care to pharmaceuticals, defense, financial services and oil and gas. She represents a global pharmaceutical company in a FCPA internal investigation, no doubt with an eye to what her former Justice colleagues might find troubling. — *Mike Scarcella*



Deborah Garza

Covington & Burling

When Deborah Garza was appointed by President George W. Bush in 2005 to chair a bipartisan commission on updating antitrust law, people warned her that the job would be akin to herding cats. "This was a diverse group of very experienced, highly opinionated attorneys," said Jonathan Jacobson of Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, one of 12 members of the Antitrust Modernization Commission. "It's a credit to her that the commission was able to reach the consensus that it did on a number of issues." More important, the commission's 427-page report, issued in 2007,

has become a go-to reference for lawmakers. It's also a significant achievement in Garza's 29-year career — which includes time at four of the country's most prestigious law firms and three stints in the U.S. Department of Justice's Antitrust Division, most recently as its acting chief. Since rejoining Covington & Burling as co-chairwoman of the antitrust practice in 2009, she has handled such big-ticket matters as Merck & Co.'s \$41 billion merger with Schering-Plough Corp. and Exxon Mobil Corp.'s \$31 billion acquisition of XTO Energy Inc. "She's been involved in antitrust issues and policy for her entire career," said Covington colleague (and Garza's predecessor as Antitrust Division head) Thomas Barnett, "and she brings all of that to bear." — *Karen Sloan*



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

U.S. Supreme Court

Sonia Sotomayor

U.S. Supreme Court

Elena Kagan

Solicitor General's Office

If things go as expected, the opening moments of the Supreme Court's fall term on Oct. 4 will be historic. For the first time, three of the nine justices emerging from behind the curtains to take their seats will be women. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan — assuming the Senate confirms her nomination this summer — will form a powerful triumvirate on the nation's highest court. All are native New Yorkers: Ginsburg from Brooklyn, Sotomayor from the Bronx and Kagan from Manhattan. Ginsburg will be the senior partner, a veteran of women's rights battles who once argued before the Court for the American Civil Liberties Union. She has been on the Court for 17 years, survived two bouts with cancer and seems determined to stay as long as she can. Sotomayor, in her first year on the Court, has shown no freshman jitters, jumping into oral argument and carrying her load in opinion-writing. "She's been an active questioner," said Sri Srinivasan of O'Melveny & Myers, who has kept track and says Sotomayor is the second-most likely to ask the first question at argument — behind Ginsburg. And Kagan? Although it's not certain where she'll locate herself on the political spectrum, those who know her say she'll step in boldly, like Sotomayor. "She's not at all shy," said Sidley Austin's Carter Phillips, who has dealt with Kagan as U.S. solicitor general. "She has an extraordinarily effective poker face." In announcing Kagan's nomination May 10, President Barack Obama took note of the history she'll make with "the prospect of three women taking their seat on the nation's highest Court for the first time in history; a Court that would be more inclusive, more representative, more reflective of us as a people than ever before." — *Tony Mauro*



Jamie Gorelick

Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr

Another lawyer might be introduced with the fact that she chairs the national security and public policy practice groups at a top law firm. For Jamie Gorelick of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr, that's almost an afterthought. Gorelick has been shouldering major public-service responsibilities to much praise for years. During the Clinton administration, she served as general counsel at the Defense Department and deputy attorney general, the No. 2 post at the Justice Department. From 1997 to 2003, she was vice chairwoman at mortgage lender Fannie Mae. She was a Democratic appointee on the commission that investigated the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. And she co-chairs one of the American Bar Association's biggest projects, its Commission on Ethics 20/20. "Jamie combines really good values, great judgment, a sharp mind and extraordinary management skills," said O'Melveny & Myers partner Walter Dellinger III. "There is no one I would rather entrust with a complex and difficult matter." These days, Gorelick is guiding BP PLC as the oil company navigates congressional investigations and other matters stemming from the Gulf of Mexico disaster. Gorelick said, "We like to be, and are, involved in the hardest issues — whether it's the investigations of the financial service industry or the response to the oil spill." — *Mike Scarcella*



Marcia Greenberger

National Women's Law Center

After losing her discrimination case before the U.S. Supreme Court, Lilly Ledbetter paired up with Marcia Greenberger, founder and co-president of the National Women's Law Center. That turned out to be a wise move. Last year, President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which reversed the effects of the Supreme Court ruling in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.* Greenberger had testified before Congress for the bill, which extended the period of time to file wage discrimination claims. "She was the top director over all the underlying things we did to get this bill well known and publicized," Ledbetter said of Greenberger. For decades, Greenberger has played a role in championing legal rights for women. In 1978, she helped pass the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which forced insurance companies to change health coverage for pregnant employees. Efforts to expand those laws materialized this year with health care reform. "Health care reform was a very major accomplishment," said

Greenberger, who testified before Congress about how insurance companies charged women higher premium rates and excluded coverage for maternity. The resulting legislation established protections against "straight-out sex discrimination in health care that women have had to endure for many years," she said. — *Amanda Bronstad*



Carolyn Lamm

White & Case

Most presidents of the American Bar Association are visitors to Washington, flying in for occasional meetings with government officials. Carolyn Lamm isn't one of those. The first Washington lawyer to head the 400,000-member ABA since 1958, she has used her year in charge to build bridges between the nationwide group and the nation's capital. Lamm has met with White House officials to lobby for aid to law students, battled lawmakers over the proposed financial industry overhaul and sued the Federal Trade Commission over the regulation of lawyers. Hogan Lovells partner Janet McDavid, who has worked with Lamm in the ABA and on antitrust matters, said that Lamm has greater credibility with policymakers as an experienced Washington hand. "She has been steering our profession," McDavid said. In the FTC fight, a federal judge ruled in the ABA's favor, while other battles are ongoing. Internal ABA changes have also defined Lamm's tenure. She oversaw a shake-up of the organization's management, brought in a marketing consultant to re-examine its message and guided a change in its fee structure to subsidize solo practitioners, government lawyers and nonprofit attorneys. When the ABA isn't keeping her busy, Lamm is a partner at White & Case specializing in international litigation and arbitration. — *David Ingram*



Debra Lee

BET Holdings Inc.

When Debra Lee took over as president and chief executive officer of BET Holdings Inc. in 2005, the company's hallmark brand, Black Entertainment Television, was facing complaints that could derail any television channel: It was boring. Washington-based BET, the first TV network aimed primarily at African-Americans, had developed few marketable stars and had no hit programs of its own. It relied heavily on reruns and music videos. Lee, a lawyer who joined BET as vice president and general counsel in 1986 and later became chief operating officer, pushed the channel to move in a different direction. In 2007, she upped the production budget and began developing new shows.

That move appears to be paying off. The channel now reaches 84 million homes across the United States, Canada and the Caribbean, and its annual awards show is among the most viewed on cable TV. BET also boasts hits like *The Mo'Nique Show*. Lee is a veteran of Big Law, having spent five years at Steptoe & Johnson LLP in Washington. Henry Morris Jr., a partner at Arent Fox, which represents BET, said, "Debra's sterling reputation is well-deserved. She sets the gold standard for integrity, business acumen and commitment to bettering society. — *Jeff Jeffrey*



Linda Lipsen

American Association for Justice

Linda Lipsen became chief executive officer of the American Association for Justice last month, but she's long helped set the agenda for the nation's leading trial lawyers group. As its lead lobbyist, she repeatedly fought off business interests calling for liability limits and tort reform, while she pushed for plaintiffs' priorities. "I'm most proud of the fact that I think trial lawyers represent people at the lowest time in their life," she said. "We are the ones that represent those people in court, and we are representing them on Capitol Hill as well." Asked for the moments when she realized her work had an impact, Lipsen pointed to the group's pro bono representation of Sept. 11 victims' families, among other examples. Victor Schwartz of Shook, Hardy & Bacon, an advocate for tort reform, offered some praise of his longtime foe. He called Lipsen a leader in moving her group from purely defensive lobbying to "pushing bills that would earn millions of dollars for her members, probably billions in some cases." Schwartz pointed to her lobbying for the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which overturned a U.S. Supreme Court decision on pay discrimination, and said Lipsen "was successful in blocking any meaningful liability reform in the health care bill." — *Carrie Levine*



Marcia Madsen

Mayer Brown

The U.S. government spends more than \$500 billion a year on goods and services, excluding war spending. For more than 20 years, Mayer Brown partner Marcia Madsen has helped her clients tap that gusher. Madsen — one of the few prominent women in an area dominated by men, many of whom are ex-military — handles everything from contract negotiations to disappointed-bidder litigation for companies such as General Motors Corp. and Verizon Communications Inc. She scored a coup in 2007 when the Government Accountability Office overturned a contract

worth upwards of \$10 billion to replace the Air Force's aging search-and-rescue helicopters, which had been awarded to Boeing Co. The successful bid protest opened the door for Madsen's client, Lockheed Martin Corp., to potentially snag the project. Madsen has also had a guiding hand in improving the system overall. She chaired the 13-member Acquisition Advisory Panel from 2005 to 2007, which was tasked by Congress to find ways to make federal contracting more competitive, efficient and transparent. Most of the panel's more than 80 major recommendations have since been adopted via statute. "It was an important role for her to play," said Allan Burman, the president of consultancy Jefferson Solutions and a panel member. "Our panel's report more or less set the agenda for Congress."
— *Karen Sloan*



Laura Miller

Nixon Peabody

Corporations and high-profile clients with a government target on their backs want Laura Ariane Miller on their side. From defending former Rep. Rick Renzi (R-Ariz.), indicted over a land deal, to AOL executives investigated for alleged securities and financial reporting fraud, Miller is one of Washington's go-to attorneys for those in a scrape with the law. As head of Nixon Peabody's corporate integrity practice, she's also one of the first women in the nation to chair a white-collar defense practice. She secured a presidential pardon in 2006 for a Massachusetts man convicted in 1983 of tax evasion and served on the American Bar Association's Justice Kennedy Commission, which reviewed federal and state criminal justice systems. Miller has an insider's perspective on Washington law, having served in all three branches of federal government, including clerking for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron White. But she shines in private practice. Paul Farrell, former AOL senior vice president, was under investigation by federal authorities in 2004 for his role in an alleged conspiracy between AOL and PurchasePro to inflate revenues. Miller won him immunity to testify. Farrell said, "I've seen her back down some of the biggest lawyers in New York." — *Leigh Jones*



Patricia Millett

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld

Within the elite U.S. Supreme Court bar, Patricia Millett of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld has achieved a starring role. Millett co-chairs Akin Gump's Supreme Court practice and has argued 28 high court cases, tying her for the

most arguments among women in practice today. "I've worked now with a lot of people in the Supreme Court bar, and she is at the apex in terms of being a fantastic writer and advocate," said Jeffrey Fisher, co-director of Stanford Law School's Supreme Court Litigation Clinic. Millett, a Harvard Law graduate, joined Akin Gump after serving as an assistant to the solicitor general from 1996 to 2007. There, she argued 25 cases in the Supreme Court and briefed more than 50. In her two years with Akin Gump, she has argued three high court cases including her high-profile victory this term in the First Amendment challenge, *U.S. v. Stevens*, and briefed more than a dozen cases in addition to arguing multiple cases in the courts of appeals. In 2009, she was one of five candidates recommended by the Virginia Bar Association for a vacancy on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit, and her name has been mentioned as a possible successor to Solicitor General Elena Kagan if Kagan is confirmed as a Supreme Court justice. — *Marcia Coyle*



Heather Podesta

Heather Podesta + Partners

Heather Podesta has been dubbed an "It Girl," Washington style — one who enjoys arcane policy details. Although she sports one of the capital's most visible last names — her husband is Democratic lobbyist and strategist Tony Podesta, and her brother-in-law is former Clinton chief of staff John Podesta — she's established her own high-profile seat at the table through political fundraising and the success of her eponymous lobbying shop. Heather Podesta + Partners, one of the few major lobbying firms headed by a woman, saw revenues increase by 49% to \$7 million last year as she signed up clients such as the American Beverage Association and Prudential Financial Inc. Known for a combination of flair and substance, she credits her success to immersion in policy issues and commitment to customer service (most new clients arrive through word-of-mouth referrals). Of course, "in some ways following the [2006] election, people liked having a marquee Democrat," she said. Mark Isakowitz, president of Fierce, Isakowitz & Blalock, an all-Republican firm, has worked with Podesta recently for mutual client The Home Depot Inc. He said her ability to sum up sets her apart: "She makes comments that really just sort of cut to the heart of where the situation is strategically." — *Carrie Levine*



Mary Ellen Powers

Jones Day

As Mary Ellen Powers has risen to the top of her profession, she's made sure to bring other women along. The partner-in-charge of one of Jones Day's largest offices — more than 400 lawyers and staff in Washington — Powers has played a key role in helping other female attorneys assume leadership posts. At her firm, women now lead five offices. In 1994, Powers became the first female administrative partner at Jones Day, and she led implementation of a firmwide policy that enabled associates and partners to work part-time. She knows the value of flexibility from personal experience. Powers was the first woman at Jones Day to become partner working on a part-time basis. "A lot of people thought it couldn't be done, and I made it work," she said. How? "Not easily," she said. Recently, Powers has represented a pedal manufacturer in the investigations into recalled Toyotas. She has also defended International Business Machines Corp. in workplace-exposure cases. Robert Weber, general counsel for IBM, said it's her "cold-blooded" ability to analyze the relevant issues that make her an exceptional litigator. Powers is equally crisp about the challenges of a Big Law career: She thinks the media exaggerate the obstacles women face. There's too much focus on women as "victims of historical problems," she said. "There's a lot of opportunity out there." —

Leigh Jones



Jane Sullivan Roberts

Major, Lindsey & Africa

Legal recruiters can play a major role in how a law firm expands and whether it thrives. That's something Jane Sullivan Roberts knows better than most. As a managing director in the Washington office of the recruiting firm Major, Lindsey & Africa, Roberts aids law firms and corporate law departments in finding laterals to deepen their bench. Roberts is a former Big Law partner herself. She joined what was then Shaw, Pittman, Pitts & Trowbridge in 1987 and practiced as a litigator, focusing on information technology sourcing and satellite system procurement. When Shaw Pittman merged with Pillsbury Winthrop in 2005, the same year her husband became chief justice of the United States, Roberts began a shift away from her own cases and toward other people's careers: She became executive partner for talent development, working to bring younger attorneys along in the law. "I love that nexus of finding the

best talent while also developing competencies," Roberts said. She has made it the heart of her newest project, the Women in Law Empowerment Forum. Roberts said that, as co-chair of the forum, she hopes to educate women lawyers about business skills they'll need not only to make partner but to take their place in law firm leadership positions. — *Jeff Jeffrey*



Kathryn Ruemmler

White House Counsel's Office

When the leader of the free world has a legal issue, Kathryn Ruemmler gets a call. Ruemmler is President Barack Obama's No. 2 lawyer, the principal deputy to, and alter ego of, White House Counsel Robert Bauer. She helps craft solutions to virtually every problem that comes before the counsel's office, from where to try the suspected Sept. 11 plotter Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to how to wring compensation from BP PLC for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Ruemmler, who has a West Wing office, came to the White House when Bauer replaced Gregory Craig in January. Bauer plucked her from the U.S. Justice Department, where she was the top associate to Deputy Attorney General David Ogden and was in charge of day-to-day oversight of the 94 U.S. attorney's offices. Earlier she served on the prosecutorial front line as deputy director of the high-profile Enron Task Force, presenting the government's closing argument in the trial of former executives Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling. "Her confidence and experience in thinking about how prosecutors work and prosecutorial decisions was on display every day," said Ogden, now back at Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr. Also on her résumé: stints as an associate White House counsel during the Clinton administration and as a partner at Latham & Watkins. — *David Ingram*



Judith Sandalow

Children's Law Center

When Judith Sandalow became executive director of the Children's Law Center in 2000, the Washington nonprofit had only three staffers. Today, the center deploys a staff of 70, with more than 300 lawyers on its outside roster ready to serve pro bono as guardians ad litem for at-risk children, and Sandalow is a leading voice for children in the District of Columbia. While no one would claim the local abuse-and-neglect system never stumbles, Sandalow's group has done much to deliver real help to more children. She traces the center's growth to a lot of hard work and vigorous

fundraising. In her early years at the center, Sandalow said, Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) helped by proposing \$1 million in earmarks for the organization. Sandalow urged Congress to send the money instead to D.C. Superior Court to build "capacity for high-quality children's lawyers" — which ultimately allowed the court to award a multiyear, multimillion-dollar contract to the center. Jonathan Smith, executive director of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, said, "Judith has built an absolutely spectacular organization...a powerhouse in the public policy arena." Sandalow has a personal stake in helping children consigned to the legal system. The same year she joined the Children's Law Center, she adopted two boys she had fostered. — *Julio Menache*



Linda Singer

Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll

As head of the public client practice at Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll, Linda Singer focuses on a seemingly narrow range of clients: state attorneys generals looking for outside counsel. But her real view is always much broader. "I've spent my whole career trying to act on behalf of the public," she said. She made her mark in Washington as the first executive director of Appleseed, a nonprofit organization dedicated to solving public policy problems. Under her direction, Appleseed secured the first state funding for Texas' indigent defense system and, following Hurricane Katrina, developed an American Bar Association model rule for providing pro bono services in the wake of a disaster. Appleseed now boasts 18 related offices across the United States and Mexico. Singer left the group for a one-year stint as attorney general of the District of Columbia in 2007. She resigned to join Zuckerman Spaeder but didn't abandon her public focus. At Zuckerman, she launched a practice aimed at public-sector clients. Client conflicts drove her to Cohen Milstein. Singer called her practice "more than busy," but, more to the point, "it keeps me on the side of the angels." — *Jeff Jeffrey*



Melanie Sloan

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

Melanie Sloan is outraged, but that's nothing new. "The problem is, more people aren't outraged with me," she said. As executive director of the watchdog Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Sloan has done her best to give people reasons to get angry. She left her job as an assistant U.S. attorney in 2003 for the nascent CREW

because, she said, she was outraged by then-House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas). "I thought he was one of the worst politicians to ever come through Washington, and no one was doing anything about it," she said. Her digging prompted ethical complaints against DeLay, who was eventually indicted and forced out of office, and CREW became one of the city's foremost hounders of ethically dubious public officials. The group has taken on politicians from the now-disgraced Mark Foley to the late Jack Murtha, sued over missing White House e-mails and issues an annual list of Congress' most corrupt members. Meredith McGehee of the Campaign Legal Center said Sloan puts allegations of wrongdoing in the form of "a specific complaint or law and the rule that was violated," thereby forcing authorities to investigate. McGehee said, "This is where her experience as a prosecutor has made a difference." — *Carrie Levine*



Grace Speights

Morgan, Lewis & Bockius

Grace Speights took over as managing partner of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius' Washington office on Oct. 1, 2008, just weeks after the collapse of Lehman Brothers sparked an economic nosedive. Speights, one of the few African-American female firm leaders, said she and the practice heads held a meeting to decide what the 300-lawyer office should do. "We came away...with the view that the downturn was an opportunity for investment" at one of the top 20 most profitable firms in Washington, she said. So Speights kept moving forward, seeking out laterals looking to leave less-stable firms. The office added attorneys in health care and food-and-drug law, areas that she judged were ripe for expansion given the rhetoric of the 2008 presidential campaign. By the end of 2009, the Washington office had added 17 partners, including former White House Counsel Fred Fielding. "It's been a very strong year," Speights said. Speights herself is a top employment lawyer, defending in some of the largest employment class actions. She also plays a leadership role in the Washington community. Last year, she was appointed to the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission, which selects candidates for local judge vacancies, and she serves on the board of trustees for the D.C. Public Defender Service. — *Jeff Jeffrey*



Cheryl Tritt

Wilkinson Barker Knauer

Cheryl Tritt is known as an expert in two of the most cutting-edge areas of telecommunications law: wireless and international. The Wilkinson Barker Knauer partner splits her time evenly between transactional and regulatory work, representing wireless carriers such as T-Mobile USA Inc. and Allied Wireless, as well as satellite companies. But one current top client isn't even in the communications business. It's the Alfred Mann Foundation, a nonprofit medical research group. The foundation has retained Tritt to win approval from government regulators to use spectrum for a technology that uses microstimulators to give patients use of paralyzed limbs. "It's a wonderful innovation," said Tritt, who called the matter one of the most fascinating of her career. Tritt first got interested in telecom law working for GTE Corp., and in 1992 she became the first woman to head the Common Carrier Bureau at the Federal Communications Commission. Michael Altschul, general counsel of CTIA – The Wireless Association, has known Tritt for 20 years. "While her substantive expertise is exceptional, it is Cheryl's judgment in knowing which points may resonate with key policymakers — many of whom she has known and mentored throughout their careers — that makes her so effective as a communications lawyer," he said. — *Jenna Greene*



Helgi Walker

Wiley Rein

Helgi Walker has a track record of securing far-reaching appellate wins in communications law and beyond. The Wiley Rein partner was lead counsel for Comcast Corp. in the blockbuster decision earlier this year in which the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit found the Federal Communications Commission lacked the authority to regulate Internet broadband service providers. Another major win for Comcast came in August 2009, when, as co-counsel, Walker helped persuade the D.C. Circuit to vacate the FCC's ownership cap for cable operators. Both decisions have resonated through the agency and Congress, spurring hearings and proposed legislation. Walker also represents Molson Coors Brewing Co., for whom she persuaded the 1st Circuit to reinstate a case challenging Puerto Rico's beer-tax scheme this spring. "It finally paves the way for a hearing on the merits," she said, adding that the beer industry has been fighting the law for 30 years. Aside from her work at Wiley Rein, where she co-chairs the appellate practice, Walker also serves on the D.C. Circuit's Advisory Committee on Procedures, whose 15 members are chosen by the judges. "Helgi is a dynamo," said client Steven Zipperstein, general counsel of Verizon Wireless. "She has a brilliant legal mind, plus she's a great writer and a highly skilled courtroom advocate." — *Jenna Greene*



Beth Wilkinson

Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison

Beth Wilkinson has held many influential jobs throughout her legal career — military lawyer, federal prosecutor, defense attorney and general counsel to a *Fortune* 500 company. For the past year, Wilkinson has been a partner at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, defending large corporations in high-stakes suits. In February, Wilkinson halted a six-case winning streak for plaintiffs suing Pfizer Inc. over its hormone replacement drug Prempro. The win was a bit of déjà vu for Wilkinson. In 2003 and 2005, while at Latham & Watkins, she secured a jury verdict for Phillip Morris USA after facing off against a lawyer who had earlier won multibillion-dollar judgments in similar cases. Wilkinson became general counsel of Fannie Mae in 2006 and left after the government takeover in 2008. As a prosecutor, Wilkinson delivered the closing arguments in the Oklahoma City bombing case, which led to a death sentence for Timothy McVeigh and multiple life sentences for Terry Nichols. "I've worked in almost every different area for lawyers that Washington has to offer," Wilkinson said. "It's given me some insight and ability to talk to a lot of different people." — *Sheri Qualters*

[terms & conditions](#) | [privacy](#) | [advertise](#) | [about NLJ.com](#) | [contact us](#) | [subscribe](#)

[About ALM](#) | [About Law.com](#) | [Customer Support](#) | [Reprints](#)

