

ISSUE NO. 12
Winter 2022

Newsletter

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FROM THE NATIONAL BOARD CO-CHAIRS

Dear Coalition Members in Washington D.C., New York, and Chicago,

Happy New Year! We are sending all of our members and friends best wishes for much health and happiness in 2022.

We are honored to be serving as the Co-Chairs of the National Board of the Coalition of Women's Initiatives for 2022 and delighted to be working with a terrific group of women who serve alongside as other officers and board members. Among many other things, the Coalition has given both of us many opportunities to serve in a number of different leadership roles, both at the Chapter level and at the National Board level. The experience we have gained in the various Coalition leadership roles has given us the skills and the courage to pursue leadership positions outside of the Coalition. One of the most rewarding aspect of being active with the Coalition has been the amazing group of women with whom we have formed meaningful relationships. We met women who are experts in many different practice areas, in different stages in their careers and even practicing in different cities (such as Anne in Chicago and Mehtap in New York). Even in the depth of the pandemic, the many connections that the Coalition brought to us consistently were, and remain, a source of compassion, support and strength.

We are living a dynamic time, with the only constant being change for each of us. Despite all the challenges the pandemic threw at us (and continues to do so almost

two years in!), the Coalition has come through it stronger and more unified across our Chapters than ever before. One silver lining of the pandemic is bringing our Chapters closer together as a consequence of the virtual nature of most of our recent programming. We hope this is also a time for growth for the Coalition. The National Board Expansion Committee has been actively engaged in discussions with groups of women in California and Texas to explore the potential of forming chapters in these two States. The National Board will assist any new chapter by providing forms of the charter and bylaws as well as presentations about the Coalition and information about past and current programming in our current Chapters. The members of the Expansion Committee and our leadership teams also make themselves available to attend any meetings to drum up interest and help organize efforts to get a chapter off the ground.

As part of our charge at the National Board, we aim to promote unity and coordination among all of our Chapters. If the pandemic taught us anything, it is that staying connected is more important than we may have ever appreciated before. As the Coalition, we continued all throughout 2020 and 2021 to offer our members and friends engaging programming and substantial opportunities to connect both at the national level and at each chapter level.

The National Board also seeks to support all of our Chapters by providing programming on a national level. The National Board Programming Committee started this year





with an impressive event, which featured Coalition founder Nicole Auerbach interviewing Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) President and CEO Veta Richardson regarding her bestselling book, *Take Six: Essential Habits to Own Your Destiny, Overcome Challenges, and Unlock Opportunities*. We are invigorated by the terrific programs that the National Board Programming Committee is working on for 2022, such as the General Counsel Panel, our National Leadership Forum, and our Women Attorneys and Authors series. Needless to say, these programs are in addition to all the exciting and timely programming that each Chapter continues to offer. If you have ideas on programming you would like to see the Coalition offer, please contact your local Coalition chapter or Marcia Owens at mowens@honigman.com and Anne Larson at anne.larson@ogletree.com of the National Board.

In closing, we look back to the beginning of our organization: The Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law was founded in 2008 by a group of women in Chicago who believed in joining forces across different organizations to benefit the collective whole. Today, across our three Chapters, we have hundreds of firm and

corporate members. The National Board has added to the wonderful community that each of our Chapters provide.

As our name so aptly describes, the Coalition is a place for all women lawyers, from different jurisdictions, different practice areas, different size law firms, different size companies, different roles within the government and different levels of experience, to join forces to help us navigate many issues facing women lawyers today. It is this inclusive nature of the Coalition that makes it a unique resource for all of our members. It is this inclusive nature of the Coalition that makes us even more dedicated to our mission to support and promote all women lawyers. We are both excited to lead the National Board at a time that we hope the Coalition will continue to grow as an organization while remaining a welcoming network for its members, full of even better advancement opportunities for all of us.

Mehtap Cevher Conti
Hogan Lovells US LLP

Anne Larson
Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, P.C.

2021 National Leadership Forum

Our National Leadership Forum Virtual Program to celebrate inspirational leaders and trailblazers was held on October 21, 2021. We kicked off the celebration with a cocktail

demonstration by Rysse Goldfarb of Mommy Mixology where we toasted our fabulous and inspirational award winners. We then heard from our keynote speaker Paula Boggs, former General Counsel of Starbucks and current philanthropist and musician who shared her thoughts on courageous communication and active listening as key traits for successful women leaders. We were inspired by Paula's personal stories of perseverance and those pinnacle moments in her professional career where she channeled her inner maverick to make a difference. Paula has a true gift of storytelling and we can't wait for her to publish her memoir.

Take Six Essential Habits to Own Your Destiny Overcome Challenges and Unlock Opportunities

On January 12, the National Board of the Coalition kicked off the new year with a program featuring Veta Richardson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Corporate Counsel. Speaking virtually to an audience of more than 120 women, Nicole Auerbach, Partner at Valorem Law Group, led Veta in a discussion of her new book, *Take Six: Essential Habits to Own Your Destiny, Overcome Challenges, and Unlock Opportunities*. Veta's six habits, Take Stock, Take Risk, Take Credit, Take a Hand, Take a Stand and Take Command, create a perfect framework for those looking to add to their new year's resolutions. Sharing her own experiences, Veta discussed her motivation in writing this book and coming up with each of these habits.





National Board Holiday Gathering

On Tuesday December 7th, the National Board of the Coalition held a virtual holiday gathering. First, Chicago-based KOVAL Distillery, one of the largest women owned and fully independent craft distilleries in the country, demonstrated a cranberry gin fizz featuring its Cranberry Gin Liqueur.

Next, we heard a presentation by Lauren Schrero Levy, the founder of The Nora Project, the Coalition's charitable partner for the holiday party. The Nora Project promotes disability inclusion by empowering educators and engaging students and communities.



Last, the Soho flagship Kendra Scott location hosted a virtual styling event. Kendra Scott donated 20% of all purchases made at the event to The Nora Project.

Coalition attendees had a wonderful time.

Gender-Bias in Litigation

It's been more than 150 years since Arabella Mansfield became the first female lawyer in the United States, and according to the American Bar Association, women began consistently attending law school in greater numbers than men beginning in 2015.

Yet, too many people continue to assume that someone practicing as an attorney in the legal profession must be male.

Judge Martha C. Warner of the Fourth District of District Court of Appeal of the State of Florida, recently shared these pithy words on this point in her dissent in *J.S. v. Dept. of Children and Families, et al.*, No. 4D21-1923:

DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA
FOURTH DISTRICT

J.S., the Father,
Appellant,

v.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES and
GUARDIAN AD LITEM,

Appellees.

No. 4D21-1923

[January 19, 2022]



Appeal from the Circuit Court for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, Palm Beach County; Luis Delgado, Judge; L.T. Case No. 50-2020-DP-000607.

Thomas J. Butler of Thomas Butler, P.A.,
Miami Beach, for appellant.

Andrew Feigenbaum, Appellate Counsel, Children's Legal Services, West Palm Beach, and Logan Bartholomew, Certified Legal Intern, Florida A&M University College of Law, Orlando, for appellee Department of Children and Families.

Thomasina F. Moore, Statewide Director of Appeals, and Sarah Todd Weitz, Senior Attorney, Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office, Tallahassee, for appellee Guardian ad Litem o/b/o J.N., J.S. & J.S.



ON MOTION FOR REHEARING,
REHEARING EN BANC AND/OR
CERTIFICATION PER CURIAM.

We deny the motion for rehearing,
rehearing en banc and/or certification.

GERBER and LEVINE, JJ., concur.

WARNER, J., dissents with opinion.

WARNER, J., dissenting.

I would certify the case to the
supreme court, as we did in *V.S. v. 2*

Department of Children & Families,
322 So. 3d 1153 (Fla. 4th DCA 2021).

I write, however, to address the motion
for rehearing's reference to me and
my dissenting opinion. In the motion
for rehearing, the movant states,
"Warner, J. opined he would hold that
§ 39.806(1)(f) is unconstitutional . . .
" (emphasis added).¹ The appellate
panel is known, and a quick look at
our court's website would reveal that

the movant has clearly used the wrong
personal pronoun in referring to me.²
Granted, gendered pronouns are tricky
in this day and age, but "he" is not the
default universal personal pronoun.

¹ As this was repeated twice, it does
not appear to be a typographical error.

² I have written on this before. See
Gore v. State, 74 So. 3d 1119, 1123 (Fla.
4th DCA 2011) (Warner, J., concurring)
("It is easy enough to find the gender
of a judge, either from Westlaw or
LexisNexis, or by going to a court's
website and finding the judge's
biography. In this day and age, mistakes
like this should not be made and it
shows inattention in brief-writing
that should be avoided. My advice is
that if the lawyer does not wish to take
the time to find out the gender of the
judge being quoted in the brief, then no
personal pronouns should be used.")

More importantly, this error reveals
the tenacious grip that the male

image has in the legal profession to
the detriment of women who have
joined the profession in droves since
I began practicing forty-eight years
ago. It still is an issue that women
are mistaken for court reporters or
paralegals by both judges and lawyers.
No man would suffer that same
misidentification, which relegates
the woman to a less important role.

We all need to be cognizant and
remove from our thinking the male-
centric image of lawyers and judges.
It is not hard, but it requires raising
one's consciousness of the issue.
And it is somewhat of a surprise
that it has persisted for so long.
After all, the iconic figure holding
the scales of justice is a lady.

*Judge Warner's daughter, Susan
Warner, is a partner at FisherBroyles
LLP, a member firm of the Coalition.*

Chicago Chapter

MEMBER UPDATES



Melissa M. Root has been
named the Managing
Partner of Jenner & Block's
Chicago office. She
will oversee more than
330 lawyers in the firm's
largest office and guide
strategic growth in
Chicago and the

Midwest. For the full press release, visit
https://jenner.com/library/press_releases/21580.



The Best Lawyers in America
awarded **Anne Larson**,
Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak
& Stewart, P.C., "Best Lawyer"
honors in 2022 for commercial
litigation. She was also named a
"Top 50 Women Illinois Lawyer"
(10th year in a row) and a "Top
100 Illinois Lawyer" (9th year in

a row) in 2022 by *Super Lawyers*. For more information,
visit <https://ogletree.com/people/anne-e-larson/>.

Chicago Chapter

CHICAGO CHAPTER AWARDS



Given the continued financial hardships faced by many in our community this year, the Chicago Chapter decided again to award scholarships to two high school students interested in the study of law: **Alexandria Juarez** of St. Francis de Sales High School and **Stephanie Ruiz** of Our Lady of Tepeyac High School. Because there were so many outstanding candidates who applied for these scholarships in 2021, the Chicago Chapter also gave small awards to the scholarship runner-ups. Thank you to the Big Shoulders Fund, particularly Joan McCarthy, for helping to identify these wonderful young women.



Sonya Rosenberg of Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP was then honored as the Chicago Chapter's Leadership Award winner. Sonya has served in many leadership positions for the chapter, including most recently as its President in 2020. According to Sonya, her two favorite things about the Chicago Chapter are: (1) the "career-long friendships and mentoring relationships" that she has made; and (2) "its willingness to self-reflect and to learn and be better." As she noted, "When you get together a group of dynamic, smart women committed to a cause, good things and good changes actually do happen."



The Chicago Chapter also recognized **Marla Persky** (left), CEO and President, and **Tracy O'Flaherty** (right), Senior Vice President, Programming and Development, of WOMN LLC, as their Inspiration Award recipients. Founded in 2014, WOMN LLC is a company dedicated to helping women succeed at the highest levels of the legal profession by increasing their knowledge of and acuity with financial drivers, client development, and leadership.



Finally, **Sky Emison** (left), associate, and **Michael K. Rentzsky** (right), Chicago Office Managing Partner, accepted the Benchmark Award on behalf of the law firm of Locke Lord. Locke Lord has a long history with the Coalition; as Sky noted when she accepted the award, the firm's Vice-Chair, Jennifer Kennedy, sat on the inaugural executive committee for the Coalition and "helped make the Coalition what it is today." The Benchmark Award is given to a law firm or corporate legal department that has demonstrated passion and commitment to leading the advancement of women's issues, and Locke Lord is the eighth recipient, joining organizations such as Jenner & Block, United Airlines, and Accenture.

To view a recording of the National program or the [Chicago](#) or [New York](#) Chapter Awards programs, please click the links.

New York Chapter

NEW YORK MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Joanna M. Roberto, Gerber Ciano Kelly Brady LLP

Why did you join the Coalition?

I want to be part of an organization that corresponds with my values. It's important to support and celebrate other women's successes. It's equally important to me, to have a connection with women who encourage and promote each other selflessly. I'm motivated by my CWIL friends.



Describe what you do.

I am a litigator, advisor, and advocate. I focus on all aspects of insurance coverage from advice to strategy implementations and services, and litigation. I enjoy speaking for professional organizations and being involved in educational engagements.

What was your first job?

I worked during law school as an intern in a firm where I continued to grow for 10 years as an attorney. I was able to use my mastery of Italian, French and Spanish languages to interact with international clients. I traveled but most of all, I was trusted with high exposure cases early on which made me appreciate the position, the people and the culture so much.

What is the best advice you ever received?

During that period of time in my life when worrying about taking the LSAT and deciding whether law school was really for me, I will never forget my wise French Literature professor from college telling me to close my eyes right then and there, and saying "if you can imagine it, you can achieve it. And if you can dream it, you can become it." A quote from William Arthur Ward. I still follow that advice today and close my eyes every so often!

Tell us something interesting about you that people may not know.

When I was 15 years old, I won a trip to the Italian Alps when I was the 100th caller responding to a radio station contest. Even though I was a minor, the radio station was kind enough to book the trip under my older sister's name. I insisted on taking the trip in the summer (who does that?). Most amazing (and free) trip ever.

To what do you attribute your success?

I attribute my success as a professional and as a person to my upbringing. Being first generation came with challenges but it made me desire, want and do. Having parents who don't speak, read or write English really forces you to become a strong person.

Coffee or Tea?

Coffee...strong coffee..with a shot of espresso.

New York Chapter

NEW YORK MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Women We Admire recognized **Elizabeth Schrero**, *Seyfarth*, as one of 100 Women Leaders of New York for 2021. "The women are recognized for their achievements within their professions where they are consistently breaking barriers into new and innovative territories." See her achievements here: <https://www.seyfarth.com/news-insights/seyfarths-elizabeth-schrero-named-to-women-we-admires-list-of-top-100-women-leaders-of-new-york-for-2021.html>.



Washington, D.C. Chapter

WASHINGTON, D.C. HAPPENINGS

In closing, we look back to the beginning of our organization: The Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law was founded in 2008 by a group of women in Chicago who believed in joining forces across different organizations to benefit the collective whole. Today, across our three Chapters, we have hundreds of firm and corporate members. The National Board has added to the wonderful community that each of our Chapters provide.

WASHINGTON, D.C. MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Board member, **Liz Yaeger**, joined Greenberg Traurig as a shareholder. [Elizabeth Dominguez Yaeger | Professionals | Greenberg Traurig LLP \(gtlaw.com\)](#)

Marjorie Just, a board member and former President, named to Top Divorce Lawyers List [Six Offit Kurman Attorneys Named to Washingtonian Top Divorce Lawyers List | Offit Kurman](#)

Lauren Azebu, current vice president, and member **Katie Dubyak**, promoted to partner at Steptoe - [Steptoe Announces Partner and Of Counsel Promotions for 1 January 2022 | Steptoe & Johnson LLP](#)



Liz Yaeger
Board Member



Marjorie Just
Board Member



Lauren Azebu
Vice President



Katie Dubyak
Member

Congratulations to the Newly-Elected Officers and Boards of Directors!

We thank you for your service and look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Washington, D.C. Chapter 2022 Board of Directors

Amanda Pedvin Varma, Steptoe &

Johnson, LLP (Co-President)

Alexandra Busch, Cozen O'Connor (Co-President)

Lauren Azebu, Steptoe & Johnson, LLP (Vice President)

Gwendolyn Holdgriewe, Offit Kurman, P.A. (Secretary)

Melissa Kopit, Vedder Price (Treasurer)

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Nicole Kobrine, Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

Lisa Bleier, SIFMA

Elizabeth Yaeger, Katten, Muchin, Rosenman LLP

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Chicago Chapter 2022 Board of Director

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Kelly Turner, American Arbitration Association

Erica Zolner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP

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Julie Busch, Johnson & Bell

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Nerissa Diaz Moisan, AAA

Irene Fiorentinos, Jones Day

Rebecca Ford, Scharf Banks Marmor

Julie Gardner, Chuhak & Tecson

Hayley Gladstone, Kunik

Sarah Griggs, Goldberg Kohn

Emily Holpert, Lathrop & Gage

Lisa Holubar, Irwin IP

Stephanie Jones, Gordon & Rees

Maria Maras, Accenture

Gray Mateo-Harris, Fox Rothschild

Kim Metrick, Walgreen Co.

Leslie Minier, Jenner & Block

Jennifer Nichols, CRG

Melissa Root, Jenner & Block

Emer Simic, Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg

Maliaka Tyson, McAndrews Held & Malloy

Ann Marie Wahls, Latham & Watkins

Molly Werwas, Airdo Werwas

National Board

2022 National Directors

Anne Larson, Ogletree, Deakins, Nash,

Smoak & Stewart, P.C. (Co-Chair)

Kim Metrick, Walgreen Co

Marjorie Just, Offit Kurman

Marcia Owens, Honigman LLP

Julianne Hartzell, Marshall, Gerstein & Borun LLP

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& Aronoff LLP

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Jean Cooper Rose, Nationwide Insurance Company

Chicago Delegates to the National Board

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Malaika Tyson, McAndrews, Held &

Malloy, Ltd. (Secretary Treasurer)

Maria Maras, Accenture (Chicago President)

Sonya Rosenberg, Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP

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Elizabeth Schrero, Seyfarth Shaw LLP

(New York Past-President)

Blythe Lovinger, Vedder Price (New York President)

DC Delegates to the National Board

Alexandra Busch, Cozen O'Connor

(Washington DC President)

Amanda Varma, Steptoe & Johnson LLP


(Washington DC Past-President)

Upcoming Events



What is a Special Master and How Can You Become One?

Tuesday, February 15
6pm ET/5pm CT
Virtual Event via Zoom



To Mandate the Vax, or Not to Mandate the Vax: A Discussion on Vaccine Mandate Strategies for Employers

Thursday, February 17
Noon CT/1pm ET
Virtual via Zoom

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF THE COALITION INVITES YOU TO OUR

Literary Lawyers Series

WITH NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR LAUREN WILLIG

THURSDAY, MARCH 10
12PM CT/1PM ET

Questions or Comments?
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Website
TheWomensCoalition.com

