

Summer 2024 Legal Industry News Updates: Law Firm Hiring and Expansion, Industry Awards and Recognition, DEI and Women in Law

Article By:

The National Law Review

Thank you for reading the latest edition of the National Law Review's bi-weekly legal news roundup! We hope you are enjoying and making the most of these last weeks of summer. Please read below for the latest in law firm hiring and expansion news, key industry awards and recognition and a feature on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and women in law.

Law Firm Hiring and Expansion

[Marianna Baggett McMurry](#) joins [Ward and Smith](#)'s Raleigh office, bringing her expertise as a litigation attorney handling complex property disputes. She assists clients in issues involving covenant enforcement, governance disputes and financial matters, as well as complex disputes related to wills, [trusts and estates](#).

"We are thrilled to welcome Marianna to our team. Her experience and dedication to client service make her a valuable addition to our litigation practice," said [Devon Williams](#), Co-Managing Director of [Ward and Smith](#). "We look forward to the positive impact she will have on our clients and our firm."

[Jackson Lewis](#) welcomes [Justin M. Dean](#) and [Katelyn M. O'Connor](#) as principals in the Overland Park office and Pittsburgh office, respectively.

Mr. Dean focuses on [employment](#) and personnel litigation, Fair Labor Standards Act and state wage and hour violations and Fair Credit Reporting Act issues.

[Jessica L. Liss](#), managing principal in the Overland Park office, described Mr. Dean as "a detail-oriented and passionate litigator," noting that he "consistently positions his clients to achieve favorable results across a wide range of employment-related matters."

Ms. O'Connor represents employers in complex high stakes [litigation](#), including claims of discrimination under Title VII, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Pittsburgh office managing principal [Marla N. Presley](#) praised Ms. O'Connor's "ability to handle high stakes matters across industries with complex litigation and compliance challenges," adding that she "brings a unique depth of perspective and experience that will serve our clients well as they continue to navigate the intricate regulatory landscapes of their respective industries."

[Varnum](#) expands its presence in Naples, Florida with a new office space located at 4501 Tamiami Trail North. Since launching in [Naples](#) in 2021, Varnum has increased client activity by 40% and hired six lateral attorneys.

"This expansion enables us to better serve the needs of our diverse client base and provides the infrastructure needed to further attract talent to our growing team," said [Tom Forster](#), lead partner of the Naples office.

"Our expansion into this office space is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team over the past three years," said [Jon Bylsma](#), chair of [Varnum](#).

[Eric Fuglsang](#) rejoins the Chicago office of [Quarles & Brady](#) as a partner in the firm's [real estate](#) practice group. Mr. Fuglsang has extensive experience working with corporations, businesses and government and nonprofit entities across the country, as well as during his previous 20 years at the firm.

"Eric's addition gives us extensive legal experience in real estate assets, investments and transactions that will bolster our already strong Real Estate team," said [Diane Haller](#), national chair of the firm's Real Estate practice group.

Legal Industry Awards and Recognition

The Law.com California Legal Awards contest for 2024 recognizes [Tycko & Zavareei](#) partners [Sabita J. Soneji](#) and [Annick M. Persinger](#). These awards honor law firms and legal departments at the forefront of the dynamic legal landscape in [California](#). An awards ceremony will be held in Los Angeles on October 15th.

[Ms. Soneji](#) is one of 13 winners of the Distinguished Leader Award, which is reserved for lawyers who have made significant contributions or implemented major achievements in the past year.

Ms. Persinger is one of six finalists for the Mentorship Award. This award honors mentors who are guiding the next generation of legal professionals.

Best Lawyers names [Bachman Law](#) principal [Eric Bachman](#) to the [2025 Best Lawyers in America](#) in the fields of [Employment Law/Civil Rights](#). He has received this honor several times.

Lawyers named to this list "were recognized by their peers in the legal industry for their professional excellence in 146 practice areas," according to [Best Lawyers](#), the oldest and most respected guide to the legal profession. In addition to peer reviews, nominees for this list are subject to an additional verification process.

Leadership Florida selects [Shumaker](#) partner [Ron Christaldi](#) as the Chair of the 2024-2025 Board of Directors. [Leadership Florida](#) includes CEOs, elected officials, farmers, high-tech consortium managers, hospital administrators and heads of key agencies in Florida, and is devoted to fostering a community of exceptional leaders in the state.

[Mr. Christaldi](#) is a leading [business](#) lawyer in both transactions and complex litigation as well as a proven leader. He will spearhead the statewide initiative to advance innovation across [Florida](#) in his new role at Leadership Florida

"Ron is a community builder to his core. Whether it is at the local level or now, at the helm of Leadership Florida, he embodies the core tenets of the mission to leave a state to our children that is better than what was given to us," said [Bob Buckhorn](#), Shumaker Advisors executive vice president and principal, former mayor of Tampa, and member of Leadership Florida Cornerstone Class Seven.

"I am deeply honored and humbled...to serve as Chair of the Board," said Mr. Christaldi, president and CEO of Shumaker Advisors Florida. "At Shumaker, we value the importance of relationships and the power of uniting top leaders to innovate and address some of the Sunshine State's most pressing challenges. I am proud to see so many of my fellow team members at Shumaker join me in supporting Leadership Florida."

DEI and Women in Law

[Becky Lindahl](#), chair of [Katten](#)'s Commercial Litigation practice, presented a winning pitch at [Diversity Lab](#)'s 2024 Moments to Movements Hackathon. Diversity Lab builds inclusive and equitable talent systems through data and behavioral science in the legal profession to cultivate diverse workplaces.

The [Charlotte](#) partner's team of fellow law firm and legal department leaders was awarded the Judges' Selection for their Leadership Escalator 10.0 (LEX) proposal, which includes high-visibility work opportunity tracking for attorneys to advance their careers.

"It was an incredible experience pitching our idea in a 'Shark Tank'-style competition to address how we can improve the general work allocation process so all attorneys can have equal access to the same opportunities as their colleagues and thrive," Ms. Lindahl said. "As a practice leader and from personal experience, I am cognizant of how work is assigned and how the type of assignments distributed can be critical to the professional development of attorneys, lead to advancement opportunities and impact retention."

[Proskauer](#) announced that [Elise Bloom](#), [Sandy Crawshaw-Sparks](#) and [Margaret Dale](#) have been recognized in the 2024 list of [Top 250 Women in Litigation](#) by Benchmark Litigation U.S. for the eighth consecutive year. [Benchmark Litigation](#) provides law firm and lawyer rankings based on litigator, dispute resolution specialist and client interviews, as well as by analysis of important cases and firm developments.

Ms. Bloom, an [employment](#) attorney in the firm's [New York](#) office, focuses her practice on discrimination, wage and hour and class/collective action matters, handling high-profile employment [discrimination](#) matters for the NBA, NFL, MLS, MLB and Bloomberg L.P.

Ms. Crawshaw-Sparks is chair of the firm's [Entertainment](#), [Copyright](#) and Media practice. The [Los Angeles](#) partner has secured victories for songwriters, record companies, recording artists and music publishers in both offensive and defensive music copyright cases.

Ms. Dale handles complex [business](#) disputes in several sectors and industries including [media and entertainment](#), consumer products, telecommunications and [financial services](#). Her broad practice covers challenging commercial disputes.

[Bressler, Amery & Ross, P.C.](#) announced that the firm has achieved Midsize Mansfield Certification for the second time.

The Mansfield Rule, launched by Diversity Lab in 2020, aims to boost diversity in leadership through consideration of goals to broaden the talent pool. Since earning their initial certification in 2023, Bressler has shown dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion by including at least 30% women, attorneys of color, LGBTQ+ attorneys and attorneys with disabilities in consideration for firm leadership and governance roles.

"We are incredibly proud to be among the law firms renewing our commitment to our Midsize Mansfield Certification," said [Leonel Peraza, Jr.](#), Florida principal and co-chair of the firm's Inclusion Committee. "We remain determined to take measurable actions to ensure that our processes remain inclusive."

[Moore & Van Allen PLLC litigation](#) attorney [Jules W. Carter](#) is [LPL Financial LLC's Diversity Champion Award](#) winner for 2024. The Law Firm Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Awards recognize law firms who have strived to expand opportunities for attorneys of all backgrounds.

Ms. Carter, chair of the firm's [Black Attorney Resource Group](#), was selected as the winner based on her work to highlight and expand diversity, as well as her pro bono work focusing on equity and social justice.

"I am extremely excited to be recognized by LPL Financial, an industry leader that believes in the importance of incorporating the core principles of DEIB into its commercial practices," Ms. Carter said. "To me, DEIB involves taking a mindful approach to promoting innovation and creativity by cultivating an environment in which our differences are valued and respected, and where we are encouraged to approach one another with curiosity, compassion, and humility."

"Jules is making her mark both internally and more broadly among the national business community. We are proud to see her earn this well-deserved recognition and we look forward to her continued impact in DEI as she simultaneously grows in her practice. Thank you to LPL Financial for working to highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion in our industry," said [Valecia M. McDowell](#), co-chair of the firm's Diversity Committee and a member of MVA's Management Committee.

Copyright ©2025 National Law Forum, LLC

National Law Review, Volume XIV, Number 243

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/summer-2024-legal-industry-news-updates-law-firm-hiring-and-expansion-industry>