

CALIFORNIA WOMEN LAWYERS  
NEWSLETTER

## Message from the CWL President

Mika Domingo



### **Dear Members and Friends,**

Our In House Counsel Network (IHCN) Committee Chairs, Latrice Byrdsong and Natalie Lashinsky kicked off the month of May with IHCN's Spring Mixer on May 4, 2023 at Angelica's in Redwood City.

On May 19, we gathered in Costa Mesa for our Annual Conference, "Blazing Our Path Forward," designed to provide our members with networking opportunities with powerhouse women lawyers from a variety of practice areas from across California and the United States. Our keynote speakers, Michelle Parfitt and Leigh O'Dell, are co-leads in the national Multi District Litigation (MDL) on behalf of over 38,000 women suffering from ovarian cancer related to the use of talcum powder. We were inspired by the work that they do. Our diverse panelists throughout the conference empowered us and enabled us to cultivate our strengths and engage in discussion to help us meet our professional and personal goals.

Thank you to those of you who were able to join us this year.

We look forward to seeing you again soon.

### **Mika Domingo, President**

*Mika Domingo is Founder and Managing Attorney of M.S. Domingo Law Group, P.C. and the President of CWL.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mika Domingo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# CWL

SPRING 2023  
NEWSLETTER

## 2023 CWL Board Officers

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CWL was chartered in 1974. It was organized "to advance women in the profession of law; to improve the administration of justice; to better the position of women in society; to eliminate all inequities based on gender; and to provide an organization for collective action and expression germane to the aforesaid purposes."

*The purposes are limited to purposes meeting the requirements for exemption provided in Section 2370le of the Revenue and Taxation Code and Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code as the statutes may be amended from time to time.*

**Thank you** to all the authors in this issue for sharing with us their time and expertise.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of CWL.

For more information on CWL or this newsletter, please contact the CWL office at 916.930.9020 or visit the website at [www.cwl.org](http://www.cwl.org).

# Editor's Note

BY TRISTAN E.H. HIGGINS

This issue of CWL News is all about action.



Our feature article is about the annual conference, which was a success. Over 130 members gathered to learn, network, and enjoy the company of their colleagues in Orange County. They listened to legal experts from around the state talk about Blazing Our Path Forward.

The next feature is about action of a different type – the tidal wave of oppression facing people who can get pregnant in this country post-Dobbs. The article “One Year Post-Dobbs – The State of Abortion Access in a Divided America” provides a state-by-state breakdown of the legality of abortion. Readers can see where there is a total ban on abortion (14 states), where there is an early-stage abortion ban (6 states), and where one can be targeted for assisting or providing aid to someone seeking an abortion (Texas, Oklahoma, and Idaho).

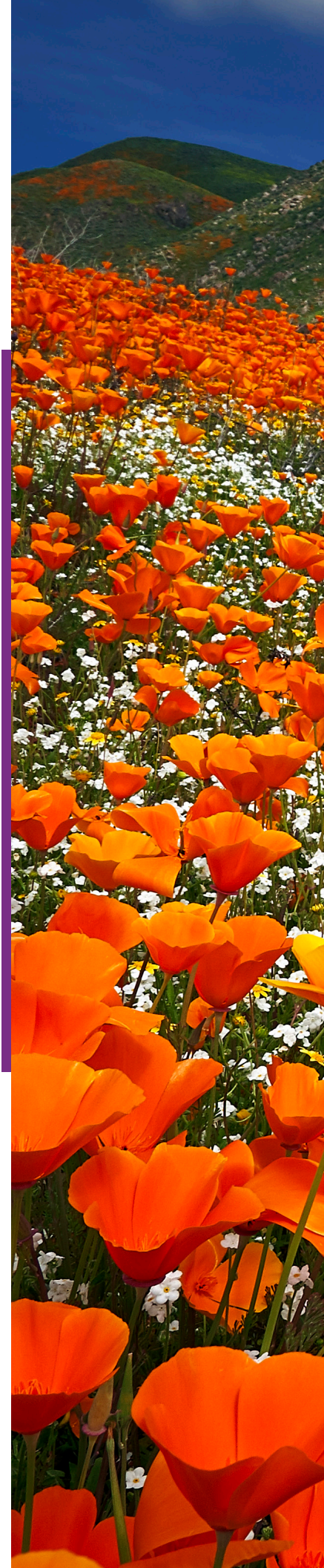
There are actions already taken that we wish to celebrate with you. The first is a happy hour held by the In House Counsel Network. It was well attended by members from Intel, Google, Toyota, McKay Brothers, Meta, and various firms – including our sponsor Husch Blackwell. The second is CWL’s flagship event So You Want To Be a Judge, which returned to an in-person event this year – the first time since the pandemic. The third is the Amicus Committee has been hard at work filing briefs and signing on to briefs. You can read all about the briefs filed in “CWL Joins Amicus Briefs Supporting Reproductive Rights.”

We have action that we hope you will take in the form of upcoming events. The Annual Dinner is on the horizon, September 21. We will hold our flagship training, Elect to Run in Northern California soon. A newly created training on legislative advocacy is being created and will be scheduled soon. Stay tuned for further details on both.

And finally, there is specific action that we hope you will consider – running for District Governor. There are several open seats, and the deadline is July 1.

CWL has been very active, and we hope that you will continue to join us as we take action!

Tristan E.H. Higgins  
Editor, CWL News





# SO, YOU WANT TO BE A LAWYER?

October 7, 2023  
1:00pm - 3:00pm | Virtual

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# Be a Part of the CWL Board of Governors

## Declare Your Intent to Run by July 31

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Join the leadership of CWL by running for a seat on the Board of Governors. The deadline to declare your candidacy is July 31 – email [info@cwl.org](mailto:info@cwl.org) to declare your intent to run for a district governor seat, and you will receive information on how to get your name on CWL's ballot.

CWL's Board of Governors is comprised of district governors from nine geographic districts, plus up to two at-large governors appointed by the president, affiliate governors representing each of CWL's affiliate organizations, up to two judicial liaisons, and the immediate past president.

District governors serve two-year terms and may serve for up to three consecutive terms. They may serve additional terms after a one-year absence from the board. At-large, affiliate governors, and judicial liaisons serve one-year terms.

More populous districts are represented by more than one district governor. Five district governors represent District 7, which covers Los Angeles County, while two district governors each represent District 3 (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties), District 4 (San Francisco and Marin Counties), and District 9 (San Diego and Imperial Counties).

CWL members are eligible to run in the district where they maintain either their place of residence or their principal business office.

**District Governor seats that are up for election in 2023 are:**

**District 2** (one seat):

Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Napa, Sacramento, Solano, Sonoma, Tuolumne and Yolo Counties

**District 3** (one of two seats):

Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

**District 4** (one of two seat):

San Francisco and Marin Counties

**District 6** (one seat):

Riverside, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties

**District 7** (three of five seats):

Los Angeles County

**District 9** (one of two seats):

San Diego and Imperial Counties

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**For questions, contact the CWL office at (916) 930-9020  
or by email at [info@cwl.org](mailto:info@cwl.org).**

*Note: In the Winter 2023 issue of CWL News, we inadvertently provided an incorrect deadline for declaring an intent to run for the CWL Board. Because CWL amended its bylaws last year to shift Board terms to a calendar year, the correct deadline to declare an intent to run is July 31.*

**CWL 2023 ANNUAL DINNER**

# FIRED UP

**WHAT ARE YOU FIGHTING FOR?**

**SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 | SAN DIEGO MARRIOTT MARQUIS**



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:**

**Hon. Kelli M. Evans**

Associate Justice of the  
California Supreme Court



**2023 FAY STENDER  
AWARD HONOREE:**

**Gloria Allred**

Founding Partner, Allred, Maroko  
& Goldberg





# CWL Annual Conference Focuses on Blazing Paths Forward

BY TRACY HUGHES

Approximately 130 attendees gathered May 19 for CWL's 2023 annual conference, enjoying speakers and programs aimed at inspiring women lawyers and providing professional tools to advance their careers.



**Approximately 130 CWL members and guests attended the CWL Annual Conference in Costa Mesa.**

The conference, themed "Blazing Our Path Forward" and held at the Avenue of the Arts Hotel in Costa Mesa, included panel discussions, keynote lunch speakers, and a networking reception, as well as opportunities for resume reviews, hair and make-up services, and professional headshot photos. Attendees earned seven hours of MCLE credit, including three hours of specialty credit, during the jam-packed day.

Mika Domingo, CWL's first Filipina president, welcomed attendees and an array of diverse panelists from different practice areas from across California.



**Mika Domingo, the first Filipina President of CWL, welcomes annual conference attendees to "Blazing Our Path Forward" on May 19, 2023.**

"This year's conference was amazing. What an honor it was to have the speakers join us from throughout California," Domingo said. "CWL's members benefited greatly from the talent and wisdom in the room."

While in between panel discussions, attendees could visit vendors from the legal and financial sectors and take advantage of complimentary resume and LinkedIn reviews from professional recruiter Kalia Petmecky from Sherman Huntington and Williams. Attendees also took advantage of hair and make-up services by Bo Ra Hair Salon and Christine Bisotti of Artistry by Christine and headshot photo shoots with Presley Holloway from Presley Holloway Photography.



**A group of attendees and speakers enjoying the conference.**

## Practical Tips & Presiding Judges

The conference kicked off with a panel on Discovery and Depositions, moderated by Lindsey Campbell, managing partner of Aitken Campbell Heikaus Weaver. Michelle West, a partner at Robinson Calcagnie, provided tips on optimizing remote depositions. Brooke Bove, owner of the Bove Law Group, gave attendees strategies for preserving the record on appeal and incorporating evidence into persuasive briefing. Bentley More associate Farnaz Salessi gave examples of deposition roadblocks from difficult opposing counsel, and how to navigate and overcome them. Finally, Denisse Gastélum, founder and owner of Gastélum Law, provided context for why lawyers should demand electronic discovery at the outset of a case.

*Continues on page 10*



**Lindsey Aitken Campbell, Denisse Gastéllum, Brooke Bove, Farnaz Salessi and Michelle West start the day with insights on best practices for depositions and discovery.**

The next panel – Presiding Women Judges – featured the presiding judges of Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside counties, all of whom are women, an historical first. Orange County Superior Court Presiding Judge Cynthia Herrera moderated the panel, which included LA Superior Court Presiding Judge Samantha Jessner, Riverside Superior Court Presiding Judge Judith Clark, and Orange County Superior Court Assistant Presiding Judge Cheri Pham.



**For the first time in history, the presiding judges of three of California’s most populous counties are women. Orange County Superior Court Judge Cynthia Herrera (right) discusses the challenges of judicial leadership with (from left) Riverside County Presiding Judge Judith Clark, Los Angeles County Presiding Judge Samantha Jessner, and Orange County Assistant Presiding Judge Cheri Pham.**

The panelists discussed their pathways to leadership, with Pham describing the challenges she faced coming to the United States at the age of eleven from Vietnam, and how her experience inspired her to become a judge. Clark and Jessner addressed the

unique logistical challenges of the shortage of judicial officers in their counties. The judges also provided tips on best and worst practices for lawyers in the courtroom, including encouraging lawyers to be brief and advising them not to take rulings personally. They also emphasized the importance of civility in and out of the courtroom.

The morning program concluded with Women Litigators of ABOTA, a panel comprised of members of the American Board of Trial Advocates, an organization limited to experienced litigators who have served as the lead attorney in at least 10 civil jury trials and who have been endorsed by other members for their integrity and civility. Past CWL president Ameer Mikacich, a partner with Hinshaw & Culbertson in San Francisco, moderated the panel, which included Carol Salmacia, a shareholder with Buchalter in San Diego; Margaret Holm, a partner with Tyson & Mendes in Santa Ana; Linda Bauermeister, a principal at Barber & Bauermeister in Santa Ana; and Kim Valentine, founder of the Valentine Law Group in Mission Viejo.



**Past CWL President Ameer Mikacich moderates the Women Litigators of ABOTA panel.**

The panelists discussed the requirements for ABOTA membership and explored the unique challenges for women trial lawyers and why they believe women are exceptionally well-suited for trial work.

### Keynote Remarks on Multi-District Litigation

The keynote lunch presentation featured the attorneys leading the National Multi-District Talc Litigation, representing tens of thousands of women who have contracted ovarian cancer linked to the use of talcum powder marketed and distributed by Johnson & Johnson and other companies.



**Leigh O'Dell and Michelle Parfitt discuss their leadership of the national Multi District Litigation linking prolonged use of talcum powder to ovarian cancer. The pair highlighted the lack of regulatory oversight of cosmetic products, used primarily by women.**

The speakers – Michelle Parfitt, senior partner at Ashcraft & Gerel in Washington D.C., and Leigh O'Dell, principal at Beasley Allen in Montgomery, Alabama – explained the legal history of the talcum powder litigation and encouraged attendees to pursue their legal passion to help others.

Parfitt and O'Dell said the federal government does not provide sufficient regulatory oversight of cosmetic and personal care products, of which women are the largest consumers. Women in the United States use 12-15 cosmetic products on average each day, none of which are subject to pre-market testing or approval by the Food and Drug Administration. Talcum powder – marketed to women, and particularly women of color, for decades for feminine hygiene – is among these products.

O'Dell and Parfitt described the toxic ingredients in talcum powder, including asbestos, and described the mechanism by which the powder enters the female reproductive system.

They provided an overview of the Daubert analysis of the science at issue in the talc litigation, the jury trials in which Parfitt and O'Dell participated, and the status of the litigation – including Johnson & Johnson's efforts to move the litigation into bankruptcy court.

Johnson & Johnson filed for bankruptcy in October 2021, using a strategy called the "Texas Two-Step," which involves using a Texas state law to divide a company being sued into two, then shifting liability to one of the newly created entities. Johnson & Johnson created a subsidiary that absorbed the liability then declared bankruptcy almost immediately after it was created. The federal appeals court dismissed the bankruptcy in January 2023, however, finding that the company was not in "financial

distress." Just hours after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an appeal of that decision in April, Johnson & Johnson filed a second bankruptcy, seeking approval for a new plan that would transfer \$8.9 billion to its subsidiary to provide settlement payouts for the talc litigation over the next 25 years – one of the largest product-liability settlements in U.S. history.

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey will hear a motion to dismiss the second bankruptcy June 27.

Parfitt and O'Dell said whether the bankruptcy stands will impact the tort system and how companies manage products liability in the future.

### EDI, Ethics and Wellness

The afternoon program began with speakers from different industries and practice areas addressing the progress of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies and programs in the legal and corporate arenas in the EDI Insights panel, moderated by Sayuri Espinosa, an associate at Rutan & Tucker in Irvine.



**Sayuri Espinosa leads a discussion about efficacy of and support for EDI policies in law firms and large corporations.**

DJ Rivera, a finance manager at CBRE, discussed the formal implementation of EDI programming at real estate management firms Trammel Crow and CBRE. He described his pathway to DEI leadership and his own experience feeling excluded and like an "outsider." He said that, while challenges remain, surveys at CBRE show that employee's feelings about inclusion are improving.

*Continues on page 12*

Hildegarde Aguinaldo, general counsel at DaVita, Inc., in El Segundo, addressed the challenges of budgetary constraints in implementing optimal EDI educational programming. Alice Cheng, managing attorney of Candelaria PC in Walnut Creek, described how organizations need robust EDI policies, as well as enforcement mechanisms and guidelines to address noncompliance. Janet Hong, president of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles and founder of the Hong Firm in Long Beach, talked about WLALA's commitment to more diversity in its membership.

The next panel, Ethical Hypotheticals, provided attendees with real world legal ethical dilemmas and pathways to resolving them. Shaddi Kamiabipour, an Orange County senior deputy district attorney and assistant head of court for the insurance fraud unit, moderated the panel. Speakers included Susan Lopez-Giss, a retired judge, family law expert and ADR Services mediator; Erin Giglia, co-founder of Montage Legal Group in Irvine and an expert on contract attorneys and referral fees; and Esther Ro, a senior appellate attorney with the California Court of Appeal, Second District, who serves on the California Lawyers Association Statewide Task Force on Civility, who provided perspectives on the application of new state bar ethical rules on civility in different contexts.



**From left, CWL Treasurer Beverly Brand, Shaddi Kamiabipour, Hon. Susan Lopez-Giss (ret.), Erin Giglia, and Esther Ro.**

The day's final panel focused on Alcohol, Women, and Wellness. Amy Guldner, an attorney-turned-coach, and founder of Reframing Alcohol, presented data from recent studies on the particular health risks for women who consume alcohol regularly. Lauren Black, another attorney-coach and co-owner of Art at Work LA, presented stress reduction techniques, including meditation. Moderator Natasha Chee, founder of the Law Offices of Natasha S. Chee, led attendees in a three-minute guided meditation.



**Lauren Black, Natasha Chee, and Amy Guldner prepare for their discussion on Alcohol, Women and Wellness.**



**Amy Guldner (center) talks about Alcohol, Women and Wellness with Lauren Black and Natasha Chee.**

## Judith Soley Award Reception

The annual conference wrapped up with a celebration honoring Anaheim Mayor Ashleigh Aitken, winner of CWL's 2023 Judith Soley Award, which is given to exceptional individuals who have made significant contributions to the legal profession and have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women in the field of law.



**Orange County Women Lawyers Association President Jessica Munk presents Anaheim Mayor Ashleigh Aitken with the 2023 CWL Judith Soley Award.**

Aitken is the first woman mayor of Anaheim in the city's 165-year history, and she has dedicated her career to fighting for social justice and breaking down barriers for underrepresented communities. A past president of the Orange County Women Lawyers Association and the Orange County Bar Association, Aitken has inspired women coming after her to pursue their professional goals and to mentor the young women who will come after them.



**From left, OCWLA President Jessica Munk; Pearl Mann, a past Judith Soley Award recipient; Ashleigh Aitken; and CWL Board Member Michelle Philo.**

The Orange County Women Lawyers Association co-hosted the reception, and OCWLA president Jessica Munk presented Aitken with the award.

CWL thanks the annual conference planning committee: Tracy Hughes and Mika Domingo, co-chairs; Michele Anderson; Susan Formaker; Gabriella Guthner; Michelle Philo; Pa'tanisha Pierson; Alice Shaw; and Lynn O'Malley Taylor.



**Tracy Hughes is CWL First Vice President and a partner with Robinson Calcagnie in Newport Beach.**

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# One Year Post-Dobbs The State of Abortion Access in a Divided America

BY JODI CLEESATTLE

A year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and held that there is no constitutional right to abortion, the country is divided, with abortion legal and accessible in about half the states and banned or severely restricted in the other half.

Since the June 24, 2022, decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, nearly half the states have banned abortion outright, have banned abortion after as early as six weeks, or have bans being litigated in the courts. Abortion remains legal in the other half of the states, with many passing new legal protections aimed at preserving the right to abortion and protecting those who seek abortions in their states.

## Total Abortion Bans in 14 States

Fourteen states ban abortion at any stage – Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Ten of the states with total abortion bans have no exceptions for cases of rape or incest. Four of the states – Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota, and West Virginia – provide exceptions for rape and/or incest, although North Dakota provides those exceptions only in the first six weeks of pregnancy.

All the states with total abortion bans provide an exception permitting abortion when necessary to save the life of the pregnant person, and some also allow exceptions to prevent serious risk to the pregnant person's physical health or where the fetus faces serious health risks or is not expected to survive the pregnancy.

Four more states have total abortion bans that have been blocked in the courts – Arizona, Indiana, Utah, and Wyoming.

In the meantime, Arizona bans abortion at 15 weeks, and Utah bans abortion at 18 weeks.

## Early-Stage Abortion Bans

In Georgia, abortion is banned after six weeks, before many women know they are pregnant. In Florida, which had a 15-week ban, the governor signed a new six-week ban into law in April, but the new law is stayed pending review by the courts.

Iowa, Ohio and South Carolina also ban abortion after six weeks, but the bans there have been blocked in the courts. In Nebraska, a 12-week abortion ban went into effect in May after the legislature failed to enact a 6-week ban.

Montana bans abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. In North Carolina, abortion is banned after 20 weeks, but a new 12-week ban takes effect July 1. In 2022, the governor issued an executive order to shield those seeking or providing abortions in North Carolina from anti-abortion laws in other states that purport to allow individuals to sue those who assist people in obtaining abortions.

## Laws Targeting Those Who Aid in Providing or Seeking Abortions

In Texas, legislation took effect in September 2021 allowing individuals to sue abortion providers and anyone who assists patients seeking an abortion after about six weeks of pregnancy. Texas's SB-8 is so broad that anyone, regardless of where they live or whether they have a connection to the person obtaining an abortion, can bring a lawsuit against anyone who helps someone obtain an abortion, in virtually any way.

Despite several legal challenges, the Texas law remains in effect.

Oklahoma passed a similar law, which took effect in May 2022, that allows private individuals to sue abortion providers and anyone who "aids or abets" an abortion. Missouri lawmakers introduced similar legislation making it illegal to help a woman obtain an abortion outside the state, but that bill failed in March 2022.

In early May, Idaho became the first state to enact a law expressly criminalizing assisting with an out-of-state abortion. The law, HB-242, makes helping a pregnant minor get an abortion, whether through medication or a procedure, in another state punishable by two to five years in prison.

## Where Abortion Is Legal

In 26 states and the District of Columbia, abortion remains legal up to 22 weeks of pregnancy or later.

*Continues on page 18*

Twenty of these states have enacted new protections since the Dobbs decision. In three states – California, Michigan, and Vermont – voters passed new state constitutional amendments protecting the right to abortion.

Nineteen of the states where abortion remains legal passed new laws or issued executive orders that shield abortion providers and patients from out-of-state lawsuits.

### **New Protections in California**

In November, California voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 1, which amended the State Constitution to explicitly protect the right to abortion.

The California legislature also passed a number of new laws last year protecting reproductive rights, in response to the Dobbs decision and to legislation in other states purporting to penalize individuals who obtain or provide abortion care out of state.

One of the first of California's new laws was AB-1666, which took effect in June 2022. That law, authored by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda), protects patients and providers in California from civil liability for providing, aiding, or receiving legal abortion care in the state.

Additional legislation protecting Californians' reproductive rights took effect in January.

AB-2223 prohibits pregnancy criminalization, ensuring that no one in California will be investigated, prosecuted, or imprisoned for losing or ending their pregnancy. The legislation also removes outdated provisions requiring coroners to investigate certain pregnancy losses and ensures that information collected about pregnancy outcomes is not used to target people through criminal or civil legal systems.

"Every Californian should feel secure that they can seek reproductive healthcare – regardless of the outcome of their pregnancy – without fear of becoming the subject of a criminal investigation," said Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland), AB-2223's author.

AB-2091, introduced by Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Oakland), ensures that information in California is not used as evidence for out-of-state cases related to anti-abortion statutes. It bans the release of medical information in response to a request from an out-of-state anti-abortion rights or penal civil action case and bans the release of medical information to law enforcement enforcing an out-of-state anti-abortion rights statute.

Similarly, AB-1242 prohibits law enforcement and California corporations from cooperating with out-of-state entities regarding lawful abortion in California. The law, introduced by Bauer-Kahan, also prohibits law enforcement from knowingly arresting a person for aiding in a lawful abortion in California.



AB-2626, introduced by Assemblymember Lisa Calderon (D-Whittier), prohibits the Medical Board of California from suspending, revoking, or denying a license solely for performing a legal abortion in California. AB 657, introduced by Assemblymember Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove), expedites licensure for health care practitioners who come to California to provide abortion care services.

Some of the new California laws seek to make abortion services and information more accessible.

SB-1142 – introduced by Sen. Anna Caballero (D-Merced) and Sen. Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley) – required the state to establish a website where people can access information about abortion services, including a person’s rights under state law, locations of abortion providers, links to information in the state, practical support services and resources, and more. The website is up and running at <https://abortion.ca.gov/>.

AB-2134 ensures that abortion and contraception services are affordable and accessible to patients and helps provide financial support for “safety net providers” of the services. The law, authored by Assemblymember Dr. Akilah Weber (D-San Diego), establishes the “California Reproductive Health Equity Program,” which provides grants to providers who offer uncompensated reproductive health care to patients with low incomes and other financial barriers.

AB-1918, introduced by Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Laguna Beach), creates the California Reproductive Health Scholarship Corps to recruit, train and retain a diverse workforce of health care professionals who will provide reproductive health services in underserved areas of the state.

SB-1245, authored by Sen. Sydney Kamlager (D-Los Angeles), establishes a reproductive health pilot project in Los Angeles County to support innovative approaches and collaborations to safeguard abortion access. Similarly, AB-2586, introduced by Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), establishes the California Reproductive Justice and Freedom Fund to support community-based organizations in providing comprehensive reproductive/sexual health education, including abortion care, to disproportionately impacted communities.

Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), who authored SB 1375, which expands training options for Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse-Midwives for purposes of performing abortion care, said California’s new abortion legislation is critical to protecting and expanding reproductive rights.

“Our package of bills ensures that all Californians, and anyone who needs to come here, will receive the essential health care they need and the respect they deserve,” Atkins said in September when Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law the package of abortion legislation. “Creating laws is like a marathon and today, we are only able to cross the finish line because of months of hard work, and leadership from the Legislative Women’s Caucus and our partners on the California Future of Abortion Council.”



*Jodi Cleesattle is CWL’s 2023 President-Elect and chair of CWL’s Amicus Committee and Annual Dinner Committee. She is Senior Assistant Attorney General for the California Department of Justice, leading the statewide Tort and Condemnation Section.*



## Elect to Run Returns to Northern California

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Each year, CWL hosts Elect to Run. This program, one of CWL's flagship events, educates women on why they should run for public office, demystifies the process of running and encourages and empowers women to elect to run. This year's program will return to Northern California, but the date is not yet set because CWL is currently exploring which county demonstrates the greatest need. Stay tuned for further details.

# Members of the In-House Counsel Network Mingle at the Northern California Spring Mixer

BY NATALIE GARCIA LASHINSKY AND LATRICE BYRDSONG

CWL's In-House Counsel Network (IHCN) gathered May 4 in the San Francisco Bay area for a Spring Mixer, its first in-person event since the pandemic.

IHCN's Co-Chairs, Natalie Garcia Lashinsky (Husch Blackwell LLP) and Latrice Byrdsong (Axiom Law) were fortunate to bring together attorneys from various organizations, including Intel Corporation, Google, Toyota, McKay Brothers LLC, and Meta. Members of IHCN, including IHCN Committee members Nicole Cabalette (Keegin Harrison LLP) and Evangelina Almirantearena (Intel Corporation), gathered at Angelicas in Redwood City, and networked over appetizers and refreshments generously sponsored by Husch Blackwell.

Guests learned that IHCN is focused on facilitating the sharing of ideas and experiences unique to members of corporate counsel departments across a variety of issues facing women attorneys. This year, IHCN will deliver virtual and in-person programming focused on professional development, networking, and sharing of experiences.

Special thanks to Santa Clara University rising 3L law students volunteers Rochel Marie L. Go and Ralph Dimarucut who assisted with registration. If interested in joining IHCN, please contact IHCN Co-Chairs Natalie Garcia Lashinsky ([natalie.lashinsky@huschblackwell.com](mailto:natalie.lashinsky@huschblackwell.com)) or Latrice Byrdsong ([latricebyrdsong@gmail.com](mailto:latricebyrdsong@gmail.com)).



**Santa Clara University rising 3L students Rochel Marie L. Go (right) and Ralph Dimarucut (left) volunteering at check in.**



**From left, IHCN Co-chair Latrice Byrdsong enjoying appetizers and drinks with Tamara Micheal and Nicole Cabalette**



**From left, Evangelina Almirantearena, Linda Kinney, and Tamara Michael.**

Continues on page 22



From left, Alyssa Samuel, Mariia Eroshin, and IHCN Co-chair Latrice Byrdsong.



Foreground (from left): Tracy Leong, Nicole Cabalette, and IHCN Co-chair Natalie Lashinsky. Background (from left): Ralph Dimarucut and Rochel Marie L. Go



From left, Lillian Stenfeldt and IHCN Co-chair Latrice Byrdsong take a selfie.



Natalie Garcia Lashinsky serves on the CWL Board of Governors as a Board Member at Large, and is co-chair of CWL's In-House Counsel Network. She is a partner at Husch Blackwell LLP in the San Francisco Bay area, where her practice focuses in commercial litigation in the areas of product liability, real estate, and business.



Latrice Byrdsong is in-house benefits counsel for Toyota Motor North America, Inc. through Axiom Law. She serves on the CWL Board of Governors as District 7 Governor, representing Los Angeles County, and is co-chair of CWL's In-House Counsel Network.

# Attendees Try to Answer the Question So, You Want to be a Judge?

BY MELISSA MARSH

CWL hosted its flagship program, “So, You Want to be a Judge?” March 16 via Zoom. The annual event, which has been virtual for the past three years, was well attended by the legal community statewide.

Judicial Appointments Secretary Luis Céspedes and Judicial Nominees Evaluation (JNE) Chair Adam Hofmann kicked off the afternoon. They answered a panoply of inquiries about the nomination process and gave practical tips for fine-tuning an application to strengthen one’s candidacy.

Secretary Céspedes informed the attendees that Governor Newsom is looking for depth and diversity in life experiences, as well as “humility and empathy.” He stated that the Governor seeks candidates who have an ability to relate to the diverse constituency who comes before a judge daily. Mr. Hofmann encouraged applicants to be thorough in their applications and candid in their JNE interviews.

The panelists discussed the application process, namely that judicial applicants must complete an exhaustive application that is submitted to the Governor’s office. The Governor’s office then selects applications to forward to the JNE Commission for further evaluation, and JNE conducts a full written and oral investigation, including collecting written evaluation forms and conducting oral interviews of individuals who can rate the applicant’s suitability for the bench. Upon completion of its investigation, the JNE Commission provides a comprehensive letter to the Governor’s office, rating the applicant as Exceptionally Well Qualified, Well Qualified, Qualified, or Not Qualified. The applicant may then be invited for an interview with the Governor’s office, the last step before potential appointment to the bench.

After an informative lead-off panel with Secretary Céspedes and Mr. Hofmann, the afternoon moved into a breakout session featuring recently appointed superior court judges. Judges Lauren Lofton (Los Angeles), Andi Mudryk (Sacramento), Virna Santos (Fresno), and Christian Towns (San Bernardino) reviewed their experiences during the appointment process and gave attendees advice that might help them improve their chances of being appointed.

The afternoon concluded with a new-to-2023 panel entitled “What I Wish I Knew Before Applying” featuring Judge Noël Wise (Alameda) and Judge Yvette Verastegui (Los Angeles). The judges discussed, in a frank manner, some little-known truths about being a judge, including feeling isolated in court and chambers, being assigned to remote or distant county locations, and having to limit social interactions with former colleagues. And so ended another successful program of “So, You Want to Be a Judge.”

CWL first launched the “So, You Want to Be a Judge” program in 1985, focusing on providing information and insight into the judicial application and nomination process and promoting increased diversity on the bench.



*Melissa Marsh is co-chair of the Judicial Evaluations Committee, which evaluates candidates for judicial appointment. She serves on the CWL Board of Governors as District 5 Governor, representing Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, Monterey, San Benito, San Joaquin, Santa Cruz, Stanislaus and Tulare counties. Ms. Marsh is a Deputy District Attorney in Madera County.*

# CWL Plans Advocacy Training Workshop

CWL's Legislative Committee is planning a Policy Advocacy Training workshop to help members and friends learn strategies to engage in effective legislative advocacy.

The program, which will be held virtually this summer, is aimed at helping ensure that policymakers understand the needs of women and gender expansive people in the law and beyond in order to pass legislation that meets their needs.

Expert speakers will provide an overview of how to track and support bills throughout the legislative session, as well as tips and tactics for legislative advocacy, including:

- preparing for and attending advocacy visits with legislators and staff;
- contacting legislative offices in writing and over the phone; and
- engaging in social media advocacy and other media-related advocacy, including writing op-eds.

The program will also highlight CWL's 2023 legislative priorities and opportunities for engagement.

If you would like to join CWL's Legislative Committee, or you would like CWL to consider supporting specific legislation, please email Jessica Stender at [jstender@equalrights.org](mailto:jstender@equalrights.org).





# CWL Joins Amicus Briefs Supporting Reproductive Rights

BY JODI CLEESATTLE

California Women Lawyers joined two briefs supporting reproductive rights in April and May in the litigation challenging federal approval of the drug Mifeprex (mifepristone), which was approved for use in facilitating abortions by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2000.

## **Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA**

CWL joined more than 200 reproductive health, rights and justice organizations in amicus briefs filed in the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA*, No. 23-10362 (5th Cir.), Nos. 22A901 & 22A902 (S.Ct.). The briefs were filed by the National Women's Law Center, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Center for Reproductive Rights, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

The plaintiffs, a group of doctors and medical groups, opposed to abortion, filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, arguing that mifepristone is unsafe and should not have been approved by the FDA. Mifepristone, which is commonly used in the United States in conjunction with the drug misoprostol, is used in more than half of abortions obtained in the United States.

On April 7, the federal district court granted a preliminary injunction against the use of mifepristone, barring the use of the drug nationwide. The FDA filed an emergency request for a stay in the Fifth Circuit, which partially granted the stay on April 12. The partial stay allowed the use of mifepristone based on the 2000 FDA approval, but blocked certain subsequent FDA decisions regarding the drug. The Fifth Circuit stay permitted a ban on mail-order use of mifepristone, limited its use up to 7 weeks instead of 10 weeks, required three in-person doctor visits, and banned the use of a generic version of the drug.

The FDA filed an emergency application for a stay with the Supreme Court on April 14, and CWL joined an [amicus brief](#) filed with the Supreme Court in support of the stay the same day. The Supreme Court initially issued a temporary stay of the Northern District of Texas order April 14, then issued an order April 21, staying the ruling pending appeal in the Fifth Circuit

and, if necessary, the Supreme Court.

CWL joined a [second amicus brief](#), this one filed in the Fifth Circuit on May 1. In the brief, amici explained how the district court's decision was contrary to the conclusion of the scientific and medical community that medication abortion is one of the safest medication regimens in the United States and around the world. Amici also explained the devastating consequences if the Court does not reverse the district court's decision and reject plaintiffs' unfounded claims of injury, including that the ban would restrict access to abortion care even in states where it is legal.

The Fifth Circuit was set to hear oral argument in the case on May 17.

## **National Center for Public Policy Research v. Weber**

CWL filed its own amicus [brief](#) in another case challenging a California law that requires publicly held corporations to include women on their boards of directors, this time in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in *National Center for Public Policy Research v. Weber*, No. 22-15822.

CWL filed its brief in support of SB 826 in this case on December 5, 2022.

National Center for Public Policy Research is one of three lawsuits challenging SB 826, which was signed into law in 2018 and requires all publicly held corporations headquartered in California to have a minimum number of women on their boards of directors. The other lawsuits are *Meland v. Weber*, No. 2:19-cv-2288 JAM-AC (E.D. Cal.), No. 22-15149 (9th Cir.), and *Crest v. Padilla*, No. 19STCV27561 (Los Angeles Superior Court), No. B322276 (Cal. Ct. App., 2d Dist.).

CWL previously filed amicus briefs in *Meland v. Weber* in October 2021 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California and in April 2022 in the Ninth Circuit. The appeals in *Meland v. Weber* and *National Center for Public Policy Research v. Weber* have both been stayed pending resolution of the *Crest v. Padilla* case. CWL is set to file an amicus brief in *Crest v. Padilla* in the Court of Appeal soon.

*Continues on page 26*

CWL's briefs in each case provide context on the discriminatory structural barriers leading corporations to exclude women from their boardrooms, explain the need for governmental action to remedy past discrimination and halt ongoing discrimination against women at the highest levels of business leadership, and highlight the many experienced and well-qualified women who are willing and able to serve on the boards of public companies.

San Diego appellate specialists Johanna Schiavoni and Melanie Gold, of Complex Appellate Litigation group, drafted the amicus briefs on behalf of CWL.

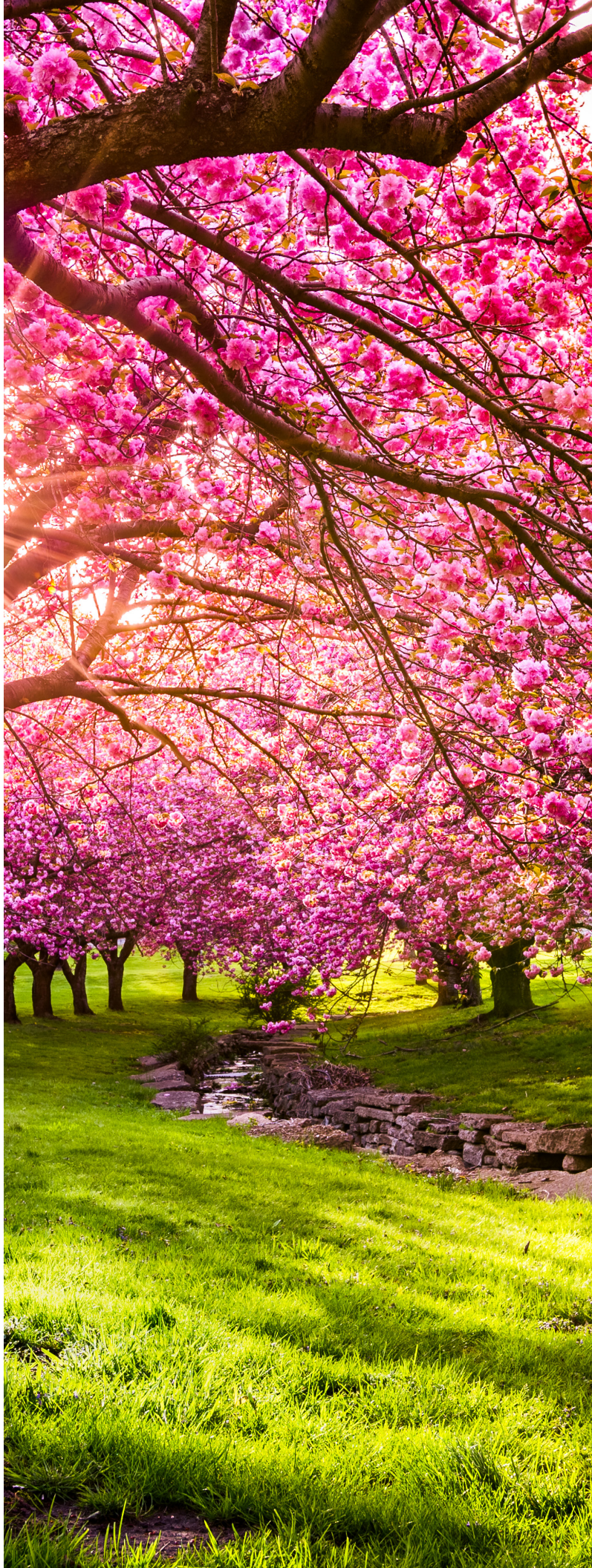
Copies of all amici briefs that CWL joins or files can be found on the CWL [website](#) shortly after they have been filed.

CWL considers opportunities to file or join amicus briefs in cases that support CWL's mission of bettering the position of women in society, eliminating gender inequality, advancing women in the law, and improving the administration of justice. CWL also supports intersectionality and is committed to eliminating discrimination against people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. CWL partners with organizations such as the National Women's Law Center to evaluate opportunities to join amicus briefs.

If you would like to join CWL's Amicus Committee, or you would like CWL to consider drafting or signing onto an amicus brief, please contact us at [amicus@cwl.org](mailto:amicus@cwl.org).



*Jodi Cleesattle is CWL's 2023 President-Elect and chair of CWL's Amicus Committee. She is Senior Assistant Attorney General for the California Department of Justice, leading the statewide Tort and Condemnation Section*



# CWL Upcoming Events

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July 10 10:00am - 10:30am	<b><u>Coffee and Connect</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
July 10 12:15pm - 12:45pm	<b><u>So, You Want To Be A Governor</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
July 11 11:30am - 1:00pm	<b><u>In-House Counsel Network Power Lunch</u></b> <i>Blind Tasting, 749 Laurel St., San Carlos, CA</i>
August 14 11:30am - 1:00pm	<b><u>Coffee and Connect</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
September 11 10:00am - 10:30am	<b><u>Coffee and Connect</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
September 21	<b><u>Annual Dinner</u></b> <i>San Diego Marriott Marquis</i>
October 7	<b><u>So, You Want To Be A Lawyer</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
October 9 10:00am - 10:30am	<b><u>Coffee and Connect</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
November 13 10:00am - 10:30am	<b><u>Coffee and Connect</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>
December 11 10:00am - 10:30am	<b><u>Coffee and Connect</u></b> <i>A CWL at Home Virtual Program</i>

# BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER



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## CWL

was chartered in 1974 and is the only statewide organization dedicated to lifting up women in the law and in society. CWL's mission is "to advance women in the profession of law; to improve the administration of justice; to better the position of women in society; to eliminate all inequities based on gender and to provide an organization for collective action and expression germane to the aforesaid purposes."

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**So You Want To Be A Judge:** An insider guide demystifying – and preparing you for – the judicial application process.

**Elect To Run:** Encourages women to run for public office and provides tips on what it takes to run.

**CWL At Home:** Online series bringing resources, community and connection with opportunities for complimentary MCLE credits.



#### THE CWL NETWORK

CWL's membership includes lawyers, judges, in-house counsel, professors and law students, providing mentorship on a statewide basis. CWL provides various networking and speaker opportunities.



#### THE IN-HOUSE COUNSEL NETWORK

In-house lawyers from across the state and industries may connect through exclusive events, listserv, and programs designed specifically for women in house-counsel.



#### LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN

Your membership supports CWL's state and national efforts to further legislation that makes life better for women.



#### AMICUS ACTIVITY

CWL prepares or joins in amicus briefs at the appellate level on matters relevant to CWL's core issues, including equal justice.



#### DIVERSITY ON THE BENCH

CWL works closely with the Governor's office to promote diversity in the judiciary, and endorses judges nationwide.



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## MEET LOUNDA LACEY, CWL's LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR



*Annals Barnings*

Lounda Lacey of the California Women Lawyer's (CWL) Legislative Committee, Ms. Lacey joined the California Chapter of Governor (2003-2011) in January in a variety of roles including as Government Policy, Strategy and Leadership. She provided regulatory compliance and technical assistance to state and local government agencies and has served in numerous legislative and regulatory roles. She is a frequent speaker at industry conferences, seminars, and webinars. She is also a frequent speaker at industry conferences, seminars, and webinars. She is also a frequent speaker at industry conferences, seminars, and webinars.

Ms. Lacey holds her registration of policy advisory to her residence as a board member to CWL in 2016. She is also active in CWL. She is a frequent speaker at industry conferences, seminars, and webinars. She is also a frequent speaker at industry conferences, seminars, and webinars.

Ms. Lacey has been a member of the California State Bar since 2003. She is also a member of the California State Bar since 2003. She is also a member of the California State Bar since 2003.

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CWL NEWSLETTER



## Dru Ramey Takes a Seat at the Table

This month, CWL published an interview with the incredible Druella (Dru) Stender Ramey. Ms. Ramey is the former executive director of the National Association of Women Judges, the former executive director and general counsel of the Bar Association of San Francisco, and a former general member of the Golden Gate University School of Law faculty, where she continues to teach today. She is a State member, chair for, and former president of CWL. She has also received the CWL's Top Women Lawyer Award, the State of California's Top Women Lawyer Award, the National Women Lawyers Association's Top Women Lawyer Award, and the American Society of Legal Education's Top Women Lawyer Award.

Listen to Summer Salfich's and Milla Durango's interview with Ms. Ramey in the latest installment of "Seat at the Table," CWL's in-depth with California's legal luminaries: [www.seatthetable.blogspot.com](http://www.seatthetable.blogspot.com).



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