Happy new year! Read on for the latest law firm hiring, pro bono and innovation news:

Ropes and Gray announced the opening of their 12th location in Los Angeles in 2022, which will focus initially on the healthcare and equity & asset management industries. Attorneys Howard Glazer, Torrey McClary, Ranee Adipat and Leslie Thornton will assist in opening the new office, as they look to expand their reach in the Southern California market.
Ropes and Gray also added Brandon Howald to their new Los Angeles team. Mr. Howald brings 22 years of private equity experience to the practice.

“Opening an office in Los Angeles is a really exciting move for Ropes & Gray. Southern California is a market where we have been active for many years. We already have a robust and growing roster of clients in a region with a vibrant private equity and asset management business, as well as strong California health care, life sciences, M&A, and technology practices. We have been very strategic in establishing a presence where our clients needed us, from Asia to London to Chicago to the West Coast. That same vision propels us into Los Angeles—and Howard Glazer, Torrey McClary and Brandon Howald have the industry expertise, entrepreneurial drive and Southern California roots to help lead us,” said Ropes & Gray’s chair, Julie Jones.

“We are opening in Los Angeles with a powerful platform: a roster of market leading clients, established partners with deep ties to Los Angeles like Brandon Howald, Howard Glazer, Torrey McClary and our powerful global network—all with the high bar of excellence clients come to expect from Ropes & Gray,” said the firm’s managing partner, David Djaha.

Real estate and general practice attorney Carmen I. Pagan has joined Romer Debbas LLP as Partner and the head of their Agency Lending Practice. Ms. Pagan specializes in commercial lending issues, senior and student housing through Freddie Mac Seller/Servicer and Capital Markets Execution programs, cross-collateralization loans and more.

Recently, Hofstra University School of Law, named alumna Ms. Pagan an “Outstanding Woman in Law” which acknowledges women who made inspiring contributions to the legal profession. Ms. Pagan is committed to the advancement of women’s issues in the workplace and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

McDermott Will & Emery announced three new additions to their Intellectual Property practice. The new additions are:

- **Simon Roberts**, who focuses on patent litigation in the biotechnology and life sciences actors. Mr. Roberts is joining the New York office.

- **Jason Leonard**, who advises on complex life sciences patent litigation. Mr. Leonard also is joining the New York office.

- **Maxwell ‘Mac’ Fox**, who focuses on Intellectual Property IP infringement litigation and licensing and counseling matters. Mr. Fox will be joining the Japan office.

“McDermott continues to make incredible strides toward advancing our remarkable IP practice into an industry powerhouse. Simon and Jason bring significant life sciences patent litigation strength to our bench in New York, and Mac’s experience with Japanese technology and life science companies is unmatched. These three bring a lot of fire with them, and they will be incredible additions to our global IP team,” said William Gaede, Chair of McDermott’s Global IP practice.
Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton announced the addition of Ms. Lauren Strickroth as a partner in their Orange County office. Ms. Strickroth specializes in fiduciary litigation, business disputes, private wealth disputes and litigation involving estates and trusts matters. Ms. Strickroth also serves as general counsel for private businesses.

“Sheppard Mullin’s private wealth and fiduciary litigation team constitutes one of the premier practices in the U.S. We are confident Lauren will help expand our impressive record of success in the courtroom that has kept us at the top echelon of this niche field of trial attorneys throughout the U.S. and worldwide,” said Private Wealth and Fiduciary Litigation Practice Group Leader Adam Streisand.

“Over the last few years, our Private Wealth and Fiduciary Litigation practice has grown and their ongoing involvement in some of the most high-profile estate disputes is a testament to their outstanding reputation and expertise. We’re thrilled that Lauren is joining us,” said Sheppard Mullin’s vice chairman Jon Newby.

Legal Industry Awards and Recognition

Who’s Who Legal – Environment named Lynn L. Bergeson as a leading legal practitioner in North America for the 17th time. Further, she was named a top lawyer in chemicals, manufacturing, nanotechnology, and pharmaceuticals industry groups by Super Lawyers for the 15th time. Ms. Bergeson, an experienced attorney in environmental, chemical, and nanotechnological law, is presently a Managing Partner at Bergeson & Campbell, P.C., as well as President of The Acta Group, Bergeson & Campbell’s scientific and regulatory consulting arm.

As noted in the recognition by Who’s Who Legal, “Lynn Bergeson is renowned as ‘an excellent lawyer, particularly in chemical matters’. Her in-depth knowledge of risk assessment and liability management receives further applause.”

Simultaneously, Bergeson & Campbell, P.C. received National and Metropolitan Tier 1 rankings for Environmental Law and Environmental Litigation in U.S. News and World Report’s 2022 Best Law Firms. As of this recognition, the firm has held these rankings for a full decade.

Chicago Lawyer Magazine named Antonio M. Romanucci, Founding Partner at Romanucci & Blandin, LLC, their 2021 Person of the Year. The award is given to honor a notable newsmaker, trendsetter or legal leader in the preceding year. Mr. Romanucci, a long-time civil rights lawyer, most notably represented the family of George Floyd in the civil lawsuit against the City of Minneapolis and four police officers.

“There is no question that this honor is a capstone for my career as a trial attorney,” said Mr. Romanucci. “It’s so hard to believe how far my life has come since my days as a Cook County Public Defender to now one of the founding partners at a nearly 25-year-old Romanucci & Blandin. It’s a testament to the will and fortitude my law partner, Stephan Blandin, and I have always had to make sure the client comes first.”

“The banner headline for Antonio Romanucci this year is the historic $27 million
settlement the George Floyd legal team secured,” said John McNally, Managing Editor at Chicago Lawyer Magazine. “It’s a major dollar figure for a case that struck nerves - many that continued to be frayed to this very day - throughout the United States. But where one could be despondent, Romanucci is hopeful. He has to be, otherwise what’s the point? So in addition to his heavy workload at Romanucci & Blandin, he’s barnstorming the country speaking to lawyers, law students and others who can make a difference in the quest for justice.”

Henry Talavera, a Shareholder at Polsinelli PC, received a Lifetime Achievement Award as part of Texas Lawyer’s 2021 Texas Legal Excellence Awards. A member of the firm’s Dallas office and the vice chair of the Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation Practice, Mr. Talavera is well-experienced in the fields of employment law and tax law, and has represented clients before the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

Brian Bullard, Managing Partner of Polsinelli’s Dallas office, notes the significance of this award: "For the last eight years at Polsinelli and throughout his career, Henry has played a vital role in the legal community, not only providing needed counsel to his wide range of clients but serving as an advocate for diversity in the profession and beyond. This Lifetime Achievement honor recognizes just how vital his contributions have been for the past three decades, and all of us at Polsinelli look forward to witnessing and supporting his continued accomplishments going forward.”

**Firm Inclusion & Diversity Efforts**

Much joined the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance (LFAA), which aims to use the law as a vehicle for change to help oppressed and underserved communities. Much previously represented the LFAA in filing an amicus brief in the Supreme Court about an issue involving Jim Crow measures used to disenfranchise Black jurors.

“We’re proud to join the nearly 300 Alliance firms working together to address systemic racism in the law. It’s our privilege and our responsibility to continue working for the rights of marginalized people,” said Steve Blonder, who led the recent work with LFAA and also serves as chair of the firm's social responsibility initiative, Much Community.

The LFAA works to create systemic change and racial equity in the law.

Kimya S.P. Johnson joined Jackson Lewis as its new chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer (CDEIO) and principal. She will work with firm leadership, key stakeholders, and practice group leaders to expand, manage and oversee firmwide DEI initiatives and lead a team to execute a comprehensive, strategic DEI plan.

Ms. Johnson will also serve as a member of Jackson Lewis’ Corporate Diversity Counseling group, advising companies on diversity assessments and action plans. She has over 20 years of experience as an employment attorney, and supports employers in their efforts to provide legally-compliant, effective and organizationally-integrative DEI plans. Ms. Johnson previously served as the chair of the Diversity & Inclusion practice group at Ogletree Deakins.
“With Kimya at the helm of our strategic DEI efforts, we will strengthen our inclusive culture that values the contributions of every employee and continues to emphasize the importance of having a workforce that reflects the various communities in which we work,” said Firm Chair Kevin G. Lauri. “In addition, I believe all within Jackson Lewis and beyond will recognize we are intentional and committed to doing what it takes to move our leadership, our firm, and our profession forward in this vital area. We are thrilled to add Kimya to the team.”

“Fostering DEI is a critical component of Jackson Lewis’ culture, and the CDEIO role will collaborate with all departments and functions to advance DEI as a firm value,” said Firm Managing Principal Samantha Hoffman. “Kimya has a track record of creating meaningful enhancements for law firms. She is known as an innovator and has already contributed excellent ideas to build on the success of our DEI strategy. We are so pleased to have her on board.”

Before her career as an attorney, Ms. Johnson worked as a public elementary school teacher in South Bronx, New York and served as campaign manager for a candidate for U.S. Congress.

Dinsmore received Best in Class for diversity in the legal profession by Crain's Cleveland Business in its issue recognizing seven "notable businesses championing diversity and inclusion."

“Everyone has a customer in the business world, and the customer population is becoming more diverse," partner Richik Sarkar told Crain's. "Look around your company. If everyone seems the same, especially in leadership, you’ll have a problem serving your customer, and if you don’t take steps to understand your customers, you’ll face failure sooner rather than later.”

Dinsmore previously earned the Mansfield Rule 4.0 Certification Plus for the 2021 iteration of the diverse leadership hiring initiative. The firm also partnered with Procter & Gamble and the Ohio Innocence Project at Cincinnati Law to create a fellowship for a diverse recent law school graduate to gain experience in civil rights litigation and policy-making.

The firm’s Pre-Law Minority Program also helps students of color at four Kentucky universities.

Copyright ©2022 National Law Forum, LLC

National Law Review, Volume XI, Number 364

Source URL: https://www.natlawreview.com/article/legal-news-roundup-december-2021-firm-inclusion-diversity-efforts-hiring-more