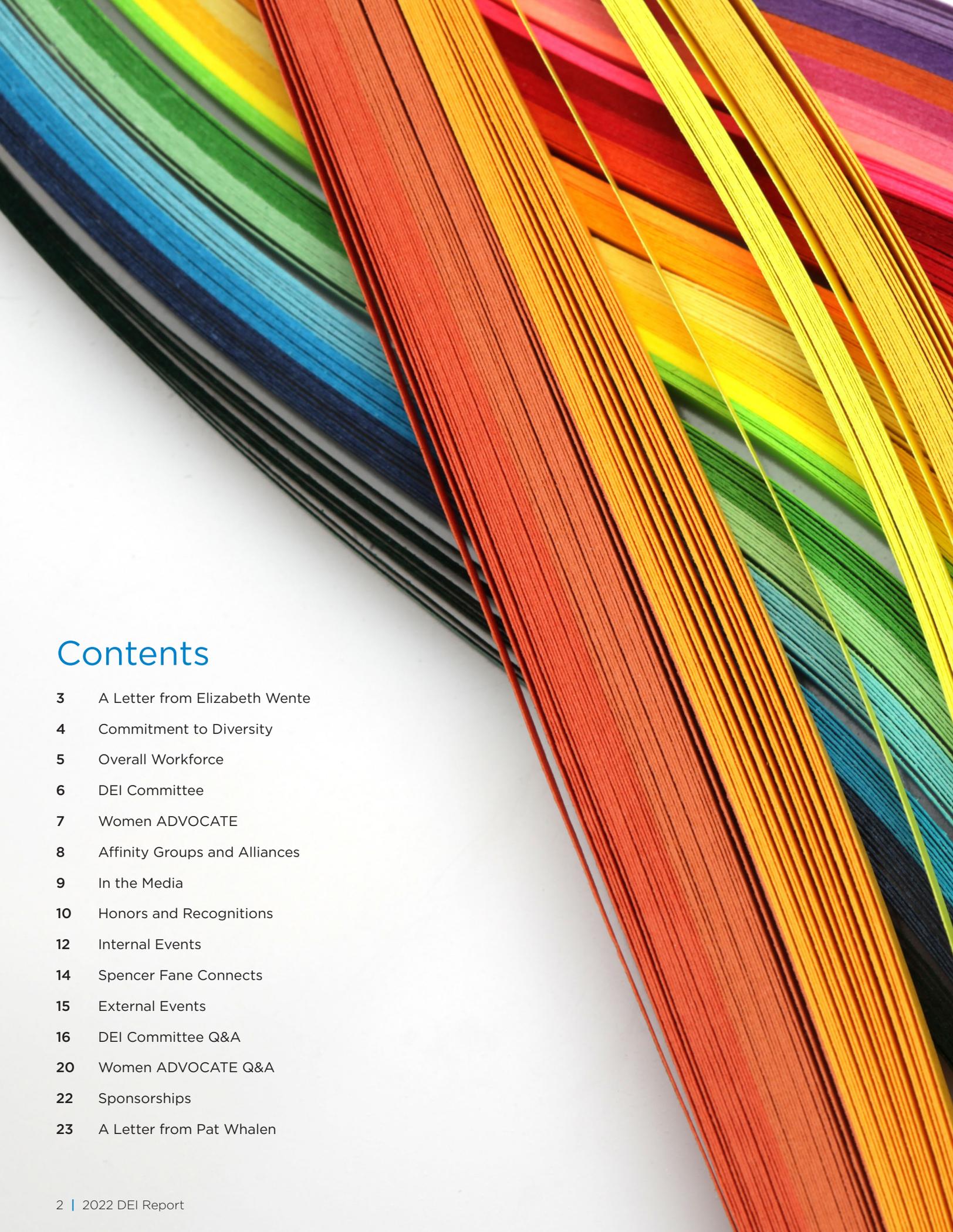


**2022** Year In Review  
**Diversity, Equity,  
and Inclusion**



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## A Letter from Elizabeth Wente

Spencer Fane has seen not only significant growth in numbers in recent years but also significant growth in its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In 2022, we continued to challenge ourselves to live by the firm's core value of Equity and Inclusion, because commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is essential to not only our firm but also to the communities where we live.

Our firm hosted its first annual Black History Month Book Club in February 2022. Firm members were invited to read Robin Di'Angelo's *White Fragility* and join in weekly virtual discussions about the concepts in the book. Through these discussions, we learned about the author's perspectives but, more importantly, we listened to the perspectives of our colleagues. The vulnerable and open conversations that occurred during the BHM Book Club series were invaluable to our firm members and to the growth of our firm's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This initiative was unquestionably one of the most impactful achievements of our 2022 DEI efforts.

The DEI Committee received amazing feedback from firm members about the value of the conversations and the connections they made with colleagues during BHM Book Club. This feedback led the DEI Committee to recognize that our firm needed more safe spaces for discussion. In response, the DEI Committee introduced the "Let's Talk About It" series in mid-2022. The series allowed us to continue to practice hearing new perspectives and building connections with our colleagues. Through the series, we hosted discussions about Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, the *Dobbs* decision, and understanding gender pronouns.

Looking back on 2022, the DEI Committee is so grateful to our firm members for their continued engagement and passion for creating an inclusive environment. We were lucky enough to welcome hundreds of virtual attendees for our Nashville office's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Fellowship Breakfast; our Women ADVOCATE's annual International Women's Day event featuring Lhakpa Sherpa; our Pride Month celebration with Stan C. Kimer and Gillian Power; and our Juneteenth celebration with Paul Henderson.

We also made great strides in adding diverse members to our team this year, bringing us closer to a fully inclusive organization. Of the 67 new attorneys we welcomed in 2022, 44% are female attorneys and 24% self-identify as diverse. Similarly, 50% of overall partner promotions were female and 50% diverse. Finally, for our 2022 summer associate class, 78% were female and 50% diverse.

As I conclude my last year as Chair of the firm's DEI Committee, I am incredibly grateful to our firm for the experience, and I hope we continue to build on the momentum we created in 2022. Through active engagement in the firm's inclusion initiatives, our firm members continue to live by our core value of Equity and Inclusion.

We hope this report allows you to explore our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and we welcome feedback on how our firm can continue to make real, significant, and lasting change.

**Elizabeth Wente**

Spencer Fane Partner and DEI Committee Chair

# Commitment To Diversity

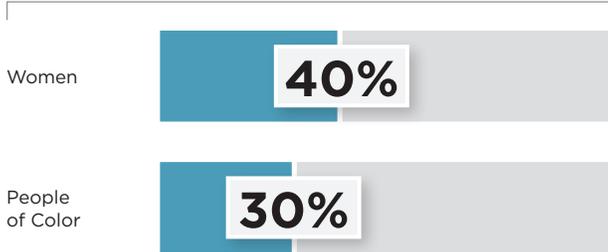
At Spencer Fane, we strive to cultivate a culture in which everyone, both attorneys and professional staff, feels comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. It's because of this respect and recognition that we can provide exceptional, innovative legal solutions to our clients. In other words, we believe diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental principles essential to the success of our clients as well as the firm. Acting on these principles best positions us to deliver the services our clients need and to engage the communities in which we serve. Additionally, the firm encourages all attorneys to make a commitment to diversity and inclusion at an individual level.

**While we recognize we have much work to do in this regard, we are taking our DEI efforts to another level by actively recruiting and promoting diverse attorneys in our firm.**

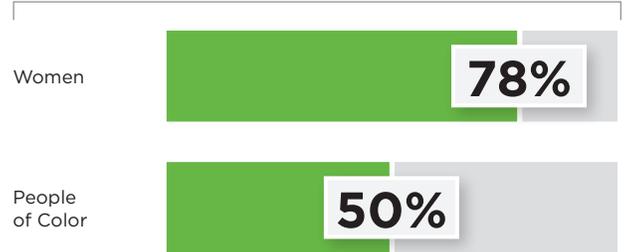
# Overall Workforce

In 2022

Percentage of First Year Class



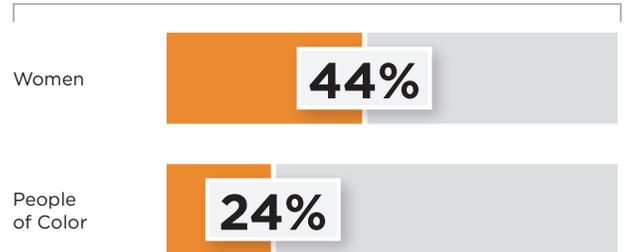
Percentage of Summer Associates



Percentage of Non-Proprietary Partner Promotions



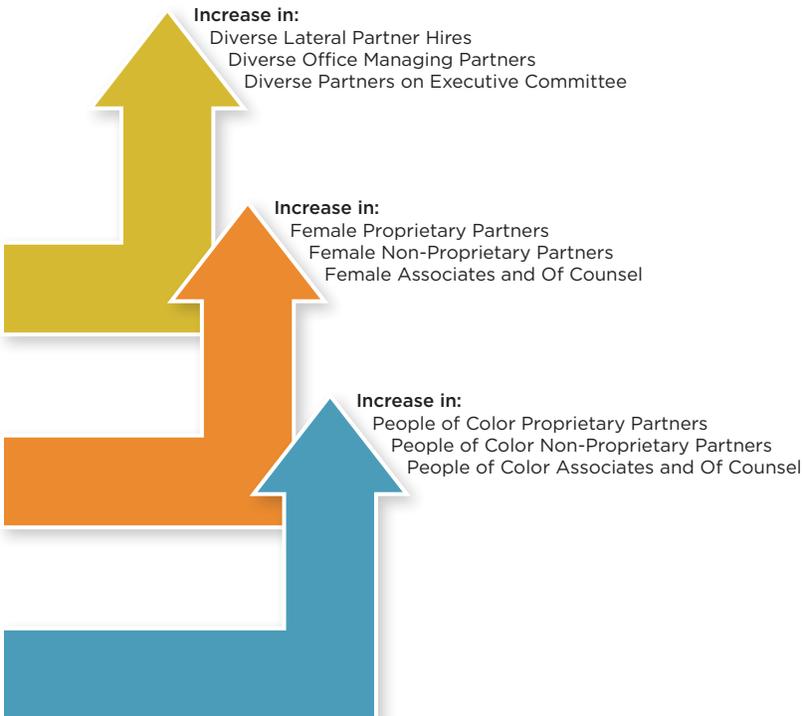
Percentage of Lateral Recruitment



Percentage of Proprietary Partner Promotions

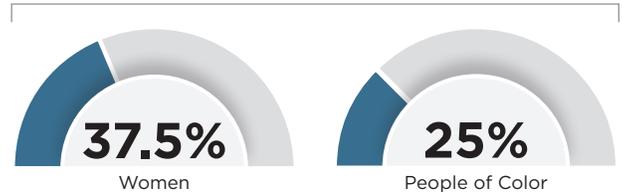


## 2022 Growth

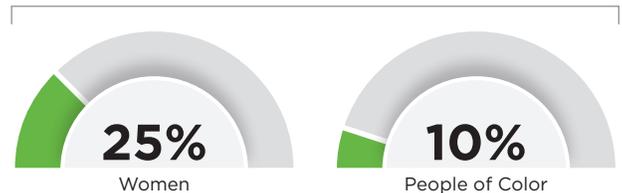


## Current

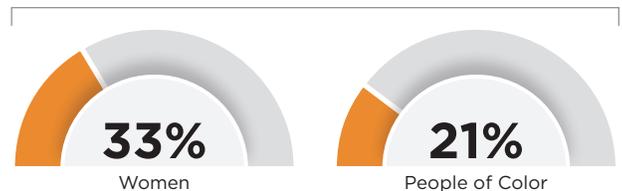
Percentage of Management Board



Percentage of Practice Group Leaders



Percentage of Firm Committees



# DEI Committee

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, working in collaboration with the Executive Committee and other Firm leadership, assists our efforts toward the benefits of diversity, equity, and inclusion by providing educational opportunities for our attorneys and professional staff, measuring and monitoring each success and challenge, investing in formal and informal mentorship, and supporting attorneys and professional staff with a dedicated budget. We breathe life into fundamental principles that make our law firm strong and a better place to work.

## DEI COMMITTEE

- **Mary Bacon** | Of Counsel | Las Vegas, NV
- **James Crumlin** | Partner | Nashville, TN
- **Bill Hopkins** | Partner | Austin, TX
- **Heather Morris** | Partner | Kansas City, MO
- **Nate Orr** | Partner | Kansas City, MO
- **Jeremy Rucker** | Associate | Plano, TX
- **DeAndrea Washington** | Partner | Houston, TX
- **Elizabeth Wente** | Partner | Springfield, MO

## DEI Committee New Faces

Attorneys Bill Hopkins and Nate Orr joined the firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee effective January 2022. Bill and Nate work in collaboration with the DEI Committee, the Executive Committee, and other firm leadership on DEI-related initiatives and programming.

At Spencer Fane, we actively seek to recruit and retain qualified individuals with diverse characteristics and backgrounds, and support diversity-focused networks, among other efforts. Our DEI Committee leads our firm's efforts to build, maintain, and leverage a diverse and inclusive law firm.

As an advocate for DEI and a leader in the community, Bill actively pushes for change in the legal industry through his involvement professionally and personally. He has worked with the Texas Diversity Council since 2005, is a member of the Central Texas Advisory Chapter of the Texas Diversity Council, and currently serves as the President of the Central Texas Advisory Chapter. Bill is often an invited speaker at numerous DEI events and has received several awards, including the Texas Diversity Council's Diversity Champion Award and the American Bar Association Health Law Section's Champion of Diversity and Inclusion Award. He is also involved in several nonprofit organizations and mentoring initiatives in the Texas community.

Nate is also an active supporter of improving DEI in the legal field through his participation within the firm and community. In 2021, he helped launch a summer program for diverse high school students interested in pursuing a career in the legal industry. He is also Chairman of the Spencer Fane Charitable Contributions Committee, supporting a program that helps nonprofit organizations in our local communities. Nate's leadership roles in the community allow him to make valuable connections and introductions for his colleagues and the firm's clients, enabling collaborative relationships and new and innovative ways to operate.



**Bill Hopkins**



**Nate Orr**

# Women ADVOCATE

## Women ADVOCATE

*Advance. Develop. Visualize. Own. Champion. Advise. Thrive. Engage.*

Women ADVOCATE is a Connect Group within Spencer Fane that aims to advance women within the firm and their civic and business communities. Recognizing that the sustained success of our female lawyers supports a competitive advantage for the firm, the Women ADVOCATE group is dedicated to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of female attorneys. We provide resources to develop our members and champion their interests and efforts. We encourage our female attorneys to visualize the career path that they want. As a group, we then work to engage each member in leadership and growth opportunities and advise so each member can own their career path. Women ADVOCATE also implements internal and external initiatives that cultivate both individual talent development and firm-wide business development. Our goal is to create an environment where our female attorneys, and all members of Women ADVOCATE, thrive.

### WOMEN ADVOCATE COMMITTEE

- **Jessica Gale** | Partner | Phoenix, AZ
- **Stacey Garrett Koju** | Partner | Nashville, TN
- **Courtney Powell** | Of Counsel | Oklahoma City, OK
- **Gulmina Shah** | Associate | Houston, TX



Being a member of the committee allows me to be an integral part of creating an inclusive work environment at Spencer Fane. Not only do we get to represent, lead, and be the voice of our women professionals at the firm, but we are also entrusted to examine and make decisions on issues, policies, and practices that directly impact our female employees.

*- Gulmina Shah, Women ADVOCATE Committee Member*



Stacey Garrett Koju

### Women ADVOCATE Committee New Faces

Attorney Stacey Garrett Koju was elected to the firm's Women ADVOCATE Committee effective August 2022. Firm-wide nominations and elections were held via online voting and Stacey was announced during the August ADVOCATE meeting.

The Women ADVOCATE group has a leadership committee of four attorneys who serve three-year terms (typically two partners and two non-partners) that meet regularly to plan activities, budget, and handle issues that come up within the group.

Stacey is a vocal supporter of diversity, inclusion, and individual empowerment and believes deeply in community investment through charitable and civic activities. She is an active board member for Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc., National Museum of African American Music, and Abe's Garden, as well as the Advisory Council Chair of Leadership Tennessee.

# Affinity Groups and Alliances

Our firm embraces its responsibility to increase diversity, equitable access to opportunities, and inclusion of people of color within our firm and community. We are proud to join our peers in the legal industry in this endeavor to raise awareness and eliminate practices that perpetuate racial bias in our community.

## Law Firm Antiracism Alliance

Spencer Fane is proud to have a culture that values diversity and inclusion and continually strives to elevate the voices of people and communities of color.



The firm is among the more than 125 law firms that support LFAA's mission "to leverage the resources of the private bar in partnership with legal services organizations to amplify the voices of communities and individuals oppressed by racism, to better use the law as a vehicle for change that benefits communities of color."

## Leadership Council on Legal Diversity

Spencer Fane is among the more than 350 law firms and corporate partners that support LCLD's mission to help "a new and more diverse generation of attorneys ascend to positions of leadership."



LEADERSHIP  
COUNCIL  
ON LEGAL  
DIVERSITY

## Affinity Group News

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### Brian Peterson and Natalie Washington Selected to Participate in LCLD Programs

Attorneys Brian Peterson and Natalie Washington were chosen to participate in the LCLD's 2022 programs. Brian joined the Fellows Program, and Natalie joined the Pathfinder Program.

The Fellows Program "is designed for diverse, high-potential, mid-career attorneys at LCLD Member organizations" and connects participants with numerous legal and business leaders, contributing to the growth and learning in their careers. As a Fellow, Brian attended class meetings, professional development sessions, and leadership lunch events, as well as joining the LCLD Alumni Program.

Natalie embarked on the LCLD Pathfinders Program for professional development. It provides participants with the opportunity to learn from leaders in the legal profession and receive coaching from a matched program facilitator. As part of the experience, Natalie had the chance to discover practical tools for developing and leveraging internal professional networks, foundational leadership skills, and career development strategies.

### Linda Knight to Participate in the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program

Attorney Linda Knight participated as a mentor in the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program. This initiative aims to ensure that first-year diverse law students receive the necessary mentoring to maximize their potential both during law school and upon entering the legal profession. Linda was a 2021 Fellow of LCLD.

Linda was matched with a mentee at the University of Colorado School of Law and offered her support and advice to help maximize her mentee's personal and professional development.

### Spencer Fane Recognized as 2022 Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Compass Award Winner

The firm was named a 2022 Compass Award winner by the LCLD. Each year, LCLD identifies law firms and corporations that show a strong commitment to building more diverse organizations and a more inclusive legal profession.



# In the Media

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## Mary Bacon Authors Trailblazer Series

For the past two years, Mary Bacon has co-authored Nevada Trailblazers, a monthly column in the *Nevada Lawyer Magazine* that profiles diverse individuals who have made groundbreaking achievements in the Nevada legal community.

Alongside her co-author Ryan Gormley, Mary shines a spotlight on legal and community leaders that include Nevada's first African American female district court judge, the Hon. Tierra D. Jones, and Reno's first openly gay City Council member, Devon Reese. Each month, *Nevada Lawyer* readers learn about a new trailblazer's career, accomplishments, and personal life.



I've always chosen to be the person in the room who stands up, speaks up, and voices that diverse opinion whether it's wanted or not. Because I know that if I don't, no one will. I also know that good things will come by expressing that opinion. It doesn't mean it will always be popular or always be wanted, but once you've put an opinion like that on the table, of a diverse perspective, they can't unhear it. It forces the room to adapt and to change, and I think there's huge positives in that.

- Bill Hopkins, DEI Committee Member

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## John Browning Highlights Often-Forgotten Legal Trailblazers in Texas Lawyer

John Browning authored an article published in *Texas Lawyer* on the courage of early legal trailblazers who broke through racial barriers and other major obstacles, as well as his own efforts to right past wrongs.

In the article, *The Forgotten Firsts: Remember Those Who Broke Barriers*, John spoke on the often neglected legacies of "the firsts," including Constance Baker Motley, the first Black female federal judge; Macon Bolling Allen, the first Black lawyer; and Charlotte Ray, the first Black female lawyer.

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## Bill Hopkins Shares Benefits of Being a Diverse Lawyer

Bill Hopkins discussed his personal experiences being a diverse professional in the legal industry with the American Bar Association (ABA) as part of the ABA's video spotlights of previous Champions of Diversity award honorees. Bill was honored with the ABA Health Law Section's Champion of Diversity and Inclusion Award in 2017.

# Honors and Recognitions

## Mary Bacon Selected as a Rising Star by the NAWBO

Attorney Mary Bacon was awarded the Rising Star award from the National Association of Women Business Owners – Southern Nevada Chapter at its annual Women of Distinction Awards.

The Rising Star award recognizes an emerging leader whose record reflects ongoing and exceptional growth in contribution to the profession and increased levels of leadership, responsibility, and community impact. Professionally, Mary was chosen for her dedication to her clients, successes as a business litigation attorney, and significant contributions to the State Bar of Nevada.



## Shea Hasenauer, Andrea Perry, and Stephen Zralek Recognized on Attorneys for Justice List

Attorneys Shea Hasenauer, Andrea Perry, and Stephen Zralek were selected for inclusion on the Tennessee Supreme Court's Attorneys for Justice list. This list recognizes attorneys for providing at least 50 hours of service annually. Dedicated to serving their community by offering pro bono legal services, Shea, Andrea, and Stephen were honored for their efforts to improve the State of Tennessee.



## Julia Vander Weele Selected to Ingram's 2021 Class of WeKC

Attorney Julia Vander Weele was selected for inclusion to *Ingram's* Magazine 2021 Class of Women Executives Kansas City (WeKC). This honor recognizes "high-achieving" women who hold professional leadership roles.

Serving as the Office Managing Partner of the firm's Kansas City office, Julia embodies WeKC's mission as both a committed leader and an accomplished attorney in employer health and welfare plan and retirement plan matters.



## DeAndrea Washington Recognized by Women We Admire as one of the Top 50 Women Leaders of Houston

Attorney DeAndrea Washington was selected by Women We Admire as one of the Top 50 Women Leaders of Houston. This honor recognizes women in Houston for their accomplishments in 2022. Women We Admire acknowledged DeAndrea for her achievements as a labor and employment attorney, her community involvement, and her various leadership roles.



## Julia Vander Weele Named Law Firm Leader by Missouri Lawyers Media

Attorney Julia Vander Weele was recognized by *Missouri Lawyers Media* (MLM) as a Law Firm Leaders honoree. The honor recognizes chairpersons, managing partners, or other law firm executives who demonstrate extraordinary vision, innovation, and leadership. MLM also published a feature on Julia.



## Mary Bacon Named as Vegas Inc's 40 Under 40 Honoree

Attorney Mary Bacon was honored with the 40 Under 40 award by *Vegas Inc.* This award "highlights the emerging business and community leaders who have risen to the challenge of these changing times and are paving the way for what's next." Mary was recognized for her dedication to her legal practice as a full-service business litigation attorney and for improving the Las Vegas community.



## Ayesha Mehdi Selected as a Real Vegas Magazine Leading Lawyer of Las Vegas

Attorney Ayesha Mehdi was selected for *Real Vegas* magazine's 2022 Leading Lawyers of Las Vegas list. The honor acknowledges leaders in Las Vegas who advocate for their community and clients. In the community, Ayesha is a pro bono attorney for the Children's Attorneys Project of Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada and an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal industry.





### DeAndrea Washington Selected as a Top Lawyer in Texas

Attorney DeAndrea Washington was selected for inclusion on the Top 100 Lawyers in Texas list by the National Black Lawyers for the second consecutive year. The National Black Lawyers Top 100 recognizes African American attorneys for professional accomplishments, leadership, and contributions to the legal field.



### Jessica Chong Named Among Nevada Business Magazine's 2022 Top Ranked Attorneys

Attorney Jessica Chong was again named to *Nevada Business Magazine's* 2022 Top Rank Attorneys list for her work in commercial litigation and insurance defense. Formerly known as Legal Elite, this annual list represents the attorneys at the top of their fields in the Nevada legal industry. Attorneys are chosen by their peers for their dedication to their legal practice and vetted through an extensive verification process, resulting in being listed as one of the top attorneys in Nevada.



### Laurie Coleman Honored as Unsung Legal Hero

Director of HR and Organizational Development Laurie Coleman was honored as an Unsung Legal Hero in the July 18 edition of *Missouri Lawyers Weekly*.

Laurie was featured among law firm employees who have consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty, often behind the scenes. The award is reserved for the state's most talented and dedicated legal support professionals.



### DeAndrea Washington Named Among Texas Lawyer's 2022 On the Rise Honorees

Attorney DeAndrea Washington was selected by *Texas Lawyer* as a lawyer On the Rise as part of the 2022 Texas Legal Excellence Awards, which honor Texas lawyers recognized as influential innovators who demonstrate strong leadership qualities and legal prowess.



### Amy Mistler Named Among 2022 Most Influential Business Women

Attorney Amy Mistler was named to the *St. Louis Business Journal* 2022 class of Most Influential Business Women. The Most Influential Business Women Awards program, established in 1999, annually recognizes the accomplishments of the region's female business leaders who have made an impact in the industries in which they work and also in the community.



### Elizabeth Wentz Named Most Influential Woman

Attorney Elizabeth Wentz was named as one of *Springfield Business Journal's* (SBJ) 2022 class of Most Influential Women. For 23 years, *SBJ* has honored women for their professional and civic accomplishments and contributions through its Most Influential Women awards program.



### Ruthie White Named Among 2022 Women Who Mean Business Honorees

Attorney Ruthie White was named to the *Houston Business Journal* 2022 class of Women Who Mean Business, honored in the Outstanding Business Leaders in Law category. In her feature, Ruthie gave a peek into her personal life by sharing her thoughts on everything from her go-to song to how she starts her day.



### Mary Bacon Wins LVNBA President's Award

Attorney Mary Bacon was honored with the President's Award by the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association (LVNBA) at the annual LVNBA Scholarship and Awards Gala.

The LVNBA is an active affiliate of the National Bar Association, which is the oldest and largest association of predominantly Black lawyers, judges, law professors, and other legal professionals.

# Internal Events

## **Spencer Fane DEI Committee Hosts Black History Month Book Club**

Our DEI Committee hosted its inaugural virtual book club in honor of February's Black History Month. James Crumlin led the weekly book club discussions with Vic Sorrell, CEO at VicWork, LLC.

The four-week event was centered around the book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Dr. Robin J. DiAngelo. The book focuses on "the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality."

During these book club meetings, discussions amongst colleagues highlighted chapters of the book, personal experiences, vulnerability, and sparked numerous questions.

## **Spencer Fane Hosts Juneteenth Celebration Featuring Award-Winning Speaker**

We welcomed special guest Paul Henderson, San Francisco's Director of the Department of Police Accountability, to speak at the firm's inaugural celebration of Juneteenth.

His remarks focused on the important history of Juneteenth, as well as his experience as an advocate and public servant who leads a team tasked with investigating police use of force and misconduct in San Francisco.

## **Spencer Fane Hosts Pride Celebration and Discussion**

Our DEI Committee welcomed special guests Stan C. Kimer and Gillian Power to speak at the firm's Pride celebration on June 28.

Stan opened the presentation with a background and history about the LGBTQ community while highlighting related workplace and marketplace issues. He shared the importance of being an ally to this community in both professional and personal settings. In turn, on a more personal level, Gillian shared her story as a transgender woman, whose life experience includes transitioning while working as an executive at an AmLaw 200 law firm.

## **Spencer Fane Women ADVOCATE Hosted Expert on Cultivating Well-Being**

Our Women ADVOCATE Committee hosted Dr. Shilagh Mirgain, a distinguished psychologist in the Department of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation at the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health, for its quarterly meeting on August 23.

During the internal webinar, *Cultivating Well-Being During - and After - the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Dr. Mirgain shared tips for safeguarding mental health, tools to include in a personal resilience kit, and practical guidance on how to strengthen connections for healthy workplace teams.



## **Spencer Fane Hosts Internal Business Development Coaching Program**

In June, the Spencer Fane marketing team launched a Client Development Coaching Program, which was designed for all experience levels and provided fresh ideas and strategies for pursuing and cultivating client opportunities. Each monthly session was led by trainer and coach Werten F.W. Bellamy, Jr. and focused on relevant topics ranging from establishing client preference to pitching new business and building diverse teams.

## **Spencer Fane DEI and Women ADVOCATE Committees Host Let's Talk About It Series**

This year, Spencer Fane launched Let's Talk About It, a series of virtual discussions that highlight diversity-related topics. Through their small group format, each event aims to create a safe, comfortable environment where every participant has the opportunity to contribute.

On May 25, the DEI Committee hosted the first session. In celebration of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, attorney Jay Ji shared insights and answered questions about the commemorative month.

Next, on July 7 and 13, the DEI and Women ADVOCATE Committees hosted conversations on the Supreme Court's decision in the *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case which struck down *Roe vs. Wade*. The discussions centered around the decision itself, its impact, feelings toward it, and ways that individuals can act if they so choose.

Finally, on August 30, the DEI Committee hosted the session Understanding Gender Pronouns. As a follow up to the firm's Pride celebration, attorney Stacy Harper led attendees through a discussion based on how her personal experiences have advanced her understanding of gender pronouns and why using preferred pronouns is important.

## **Unconscious Bias: Creating a More Conscious Law Firm**

As part of its yearly DEI education offerings, Spencer Fane offered the training course, Unconscious Bias: Creating a More Conscious Law Firm, to all attorneys and staff. Hosted by returning guest instructor Dionne M. King, CEO of DMK Consults LLC, this training allowed attendees to learn how bias affects law firms in unprecedented ways.

The firm offered six opportunities throughout October and November to participate in this interactive course with one of the sessions including CLE ethics credit. The training covered topics such as relevant terms and definitions, industry trends, ethical responsibility, competency, and awareness. Participants learned how to effectively mitigate bias, understand and appreciate diversity, and leverage skills to develop inclusion competency.

# Spencer Fane Connects

The DEI Committee proudly launched *Spencer Fane Connects*, a series of conversations featuring colleagues and special guests who focus on improving DEI at the firm and in the community on a daily basis. Through these virtual sessions, Spencer Fane attorneys and staff are able to spend an hour with DEI leaders and other guests as they answer questions on their background, career highlights, diversity efforts, and more.

This year, our *Connects* series sessions included:



**Ayesha Mehdi**

Ayesha is a first-generation lawyer committed to giving back to the community and improving DEI in the legal field. She is involved in numerous associations, including the American Bar Association, American Health Law Association, State Bar of Nevada, and the Clark County Bar Association.

During the SF Connects segment, Ayesha reflected on her upbringing in Pakistan and immigration to the United States, touching on what it was like to go from being part of the majority to the minority as a Pakistani Muslim. She also discussed the traditional and nontraditional aspects of her marriage as well as how she balanced law school and her career with raising children.



**Elizabeth Lally**

During the SF Connects segment, Elizabeth shared her path of becoming a lawyer, the mentorship and support she has received along the way, and the overall value she's gained from that trusted support. She also described how she overcame fear and self doubt throughout her career and the importance of being true and authentic.

Elizabeth explained that continuous learning, goals, introspection, and self-reliance are significant parts of her life. She shared her favorite quote that she sees daily, "everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear."



**Julia Vander Weele**

Julia Vander Weele is an experienced employee benefits attorney, serves as the Office Managing Partner of the Kansas City office, and has a lengthy history of serving on the Executive Committee. She has received recognition for her leadership and legal practice, being named a *Missouri Lawyers Media* 2022 Law Firm Leaders honoree and included on *Ingram's Magazine* 2021 Class of Women Executives Kansas City list.

During the SF Connects segment, Julia shared her stories related to her path to leadership, how she has built her book of business, her life as a leader, wife, and mom, and her perspective on the DEI efforts at the firm.

# External Events

## Annual MLK Day Virtual Event

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., our Nashville office was proud to present their Annual MLK Day Fellowship Breakfast. This year marked the 21st MLK Fellowship Breakfast, and we are excited to continue this annual tradition.

The event celebrates Dr. King's legacy through the opportunity to engage with each other and recall and continue his work toward his global vision, Beloved Community. The vision centers on human decency not allowing for poverty, hunger, or homelessness; sustaining a spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood that replaces discrimination, bigotry, and racism; and striving to build a society where justice prevails over war and conflict to progress social justice in our communities.

## 2022 DRI Diversity for Success Seminar and Employment and Labor Law Seminar

The firm sponsored two DRI events - the seventh annual Diversity for Success Seminar and Corporate Expo and the 45th annual Employment and Labor Law Seminar.

Attorneys Michael Belo, James Crumlin, Paz Haynes, Helen Holden, Fred Johnson, Linda Knight, Stacey Garrett Koju, Casey Murray, Valentine Uduebor, DeAndrea Washington, and Randi Winter represented the firm.

The Diversity for Success event was an opportunity to network with others in the legal community and learn about strategies to promote and improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in law firms, business development techniques, and mental health awareness.

## Spencer Fane Joins Women's Power Summit on Law and Leadership

Spencer Fane was pleased to sponsor the Center for Women in Law (CWIL) 2022 Women's Power Summit on Law and Leadership. This event brought together women in the legal profession to network, generate ideas, learn about recent developments in the law, and celebrate women's empowerment.

The CWIL is an organization that cultivates an educational environment to advance the success of women in the legal industry and work toward equity and justice for all.

## International Women's Day Celebration Featuring Lhakpa Sherpa

The Women ADVOCATE Committee hosted an International Women's Day event for employees, clients, and friends of the firm featuring world-renowned mountain climber, Lhakpa Sherpa, on March 8.

Summitting Mount Everest nine times and achieving the most Everest climbs of any woman in the world, Lhakpa is an inspiration to all. At the event, attendees learned about Lhakpa's achievements including her determination to "just keep going" despite the obstacles in her way and how she "breaks the bias" every day.

Spencer Fane was pleased to sponsor Lhakpa Sherpa's most recent expedition, in which she achieved her 10th summit of Mount Everest on May 13, where she broke her world record.



# Q & A



**Mary Bacon**  
Of Counsel | Las Vegas, NV

### *What value does DEI bring to the firm?*

It would be hard to overstate the impact. Employees feel more connected and engaged, clients obtain the benefit of more diverse ideas and better teams, and the firm succeeds by evolving to recruit and retain the best talent.

### *What has been your favorite DEI-related activity in 2022?*

The SF Connects series. I love getting to know members of the firm on a personal level and learning about all of our differences in an open and non-judgmental environment.

### *What is the biggest challenge when it comes to addressing the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal industry?*

The sweat equity that's required to diversify a firm since for most, it means rethinking their model. It takes resources and commitment to identify barriers to entry for recruiting, retaining, and investing in diverse talent. It's easier to not upset the applecart when you're asking attorneys to devote non-billable time to their already hectic schedule.



**James Crumlin**  
Partner | Nashville, TN

### *What DEI project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?*

There is no one particular project or initiative. I look forward to our firm continuing to prioritize building a diverse workforce and creating a work environment that is equitable and inclusive for everyone. I also look forward to helping enhance our culture through changes in policies and practices, attorney and professional staff training, targeted recruiting, and firm-sponsored DEI awareness events for everyone at the firm, our clients, and our communities.

### *What is the best part of being a member of the DEI committee?*

I love discussing the importance of learning and making space for diverse cultures and experiences. Being exposed to a wider range of different opinions, ideas, and skills far more regularly encourages everyone to share their own.

### *How does Spencer Fane - or you as a committee member - measure DEI success?*

By continuing to set firm goals. Make the retention of attorneys and professional staff a continued priority. Create a system of accountability of diversity, equity, and inclusion embedded at every level of our firm culture.



DEI elevates firm-wide engagement which helps foster mutual respect and connectedness. This, in turn, enables a sense of belonging, which sets the foundation for success in a law firm setting.

- Jeremy Rucker, DEI Committee Member

# DEI Committee



**Bill Hopkins**  
Partner | Austin, TX

## *What is the best part of being a member of the DEI committee?*

My fellow committee members. These individuals are wonderfully diverse in our backgrounds, demographics, and perspectives. As a result, we all bring our authentic selves to every topic, discussion, and project. We work together to seek and create the best solutions that consider as many factors as possible. We certainly don't have all the answers, but having such a diverse group makes the process work better and keeps us both grounded and driven toward our goals.

## *What value does DEI bring to the firm?*

Significant value. As the world around us continues to be increasingly demographically diverse, the future of law practice evolves and so do client relationships. Providing legal services to this next generation requires a cultural competence that only comes from being able to respect, understand, and appreciate diverse clients and their changing needs, interests, and expectations. By continually working on such competence, we take a significant step toward ensuring that our firm remains competitive in this new demographic marketplace.

## *Has one of your fellow committee members or another Spencer Fane colleague inspired your mission to create a more DEI-focused environment? Who and how so?*

If I had to pick one, it would be Elizabeth Wentz. She has done an incredible job leading this committee and has managed to keep us motivated, focused, and positive. We all understand that this journey is a marathon, not a sprint, so everyone helps to pace each other so that we can maintain our stamina and keep working toward the best outcomes for the firm.



**Heather Morris**  
Partner | Kansas City, MO

## *In your opinion, what is the biggest reward of working in a diverse and inclusive environment?*

The ability for personal growth and connection. I appreciate being exposed to different backgrounds and ideas because I believe that it strengthens my own analysis of problems and decision-making abilities. I also enjoy learning about my colleagues and finding shared interests. Inclusivity is particularly rewarding because it helps to get everyone working in the same direction and improves our daily interactions.

## *What DEI project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?*

I am excited to see us finally get a couple of Connect Groups off the ground! We have been working toward that goal for a long time, and I can't wait to see how it benefits the entire firm.

## *What inspired you to join the DEI committee?*

I was fortunate several years ago, as an associate, to be asked to be a leader of the Women ADVOCATE group (formerly known as Women in Business). After having a great learning experience with that group and seeing the possibilities for personal and firm growth, I was excited to find other ways to get involved. As soon as I heard that the firm was starting a DEI Committee, I volunteered to help in whatever way I could.

# Q&A



**Nate Orr**  
Partner | Kansas City, MO

### ***What has been your favorite DEI-related activity in 2022?***

The launch of our book discussions in which we featured *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. It was my first opportunity to contribute to the committee's valuable work. Being able to do so in an activity that featured an author with whom I'd already had some interaction was special. It also gave me an opportunity to see James Crumlin's talent which further strengthened our friendship.

### ***In your opinion, what is the biggest reward of working in a diverse and inclusive environment?***

Success. There are countless studies about how broadening an organization's perspective and approach toward challenges leads to much higher rates of success. In addition to making the world a much more interesting place, building a diverse and inclusive environment helps organizations find new voices and ideas, which expands thought leadership and ultimately the success and health of the organization.

### ***What is the best part of being a member of the DEI committee?***

I get a chance to help shape the way Spencer Fane approaches such a critical topic. I'm always interested in making the firm a better and more successful organization. And right now, there aren't many more impactful ways to improve and build an organization than by strengthening the organization's ability to build a truly diverse and inclusive environment.



**Jeremy Rucker**  
Associate | Plano, TX

### ***What value does DEI bring to the firm?***

DEI elevates firm-wide engagement which helps foster mutual respect and connectedness. This, in turn, enables a sense of belonging, which sets the foundation for success in a law firm setting.

### ***Has one of your fellow committee members or another Spencer Fane colleague inspired your mission to create a more DEI-focused environment? Who and how so?***

It is tough to single out one committee member. All have worked extremely hard over the past several years – from Elizabeth's tireless dedication to her role as committee chair to everyone else's commitment to elevating Spencer Fane's diversity initiatives. Each member has inspired my personal and professional mission to create a more DEI-focused environment.

### ***What has been your favorite DEI-related activity in 2022?***

One of my favorite activities was the Black History Month Book Club series. It was interesting to hear various unique perspectives and take a peek at life through the lens of the experiences of some of our colleagues.

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I think the beauty of our firm is that I get the chance to be inspired by so many different people on a regular basis. Everyone adds their own, unique perspective to the DEI work and to our firm as a whole.

– Elizabeth Wente, DEI Committee Member

# DEI Committee



**DeAndrea Washington**  
Partner | Houston, TX

## *What is the best part of being a member of the DEI committee?*

The ability to not only practice law but to effect positive change throughout our firm is invaluable. Seeing the amount of growth, progress, and empowerment has been personally rewarding. Collaborating with firm members from all walks of life, having the opportunity to develop personal relationships, and influencing the daily work lives of others while still practicing law could not happen at this level at another firm.

## *What inspired you to join the DEI committee?*

Personal commitment. Shortly after I joined in 2020, the world was in turmoil after George Floyd's death. We needed to lead by example and lead with compassion. What better time to be a part of the DEI committee, to foster a more inclusive environment internally while grappling with societal ills, and provide a platform for voices to be heard and change to transpire?

## *What DEI project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?*

Our SF Connect Groups will begin to launch in 2023. These groups will provide another touch point of engagement and expand opportunities for connection and collaboration. I look forward to continuing the work in 2023, partnering with firm members, and continuing to advance our efforts of equality and inclusivity.



**Elizabeth Wentz**  
Partner | Springfield, MO

## *How does Spencer Fane – or you as committee chair – measure DEI success?*

We certainly look at our diversity numbers but that is not the full picture. I tend to measure success by listening to our firm members and reviewing our engagement. Examples include looking at who participates in the DEI events, who we hire, who leaves, and what our members say about their experiences. I also often remind myself that all steps forward, no matter how large or how small, are progress.

## *What is the biggest challenge when it comes to addressing the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal industry?*

Many times, we do things because that is the way they have always been done. This raises a challenge because the legal industry and its systems have struggled with DEI. I think the most significant challenge is asking people to think about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and the impact that their decisions have on both the people that it positively impacts and the people that it negatively impacts. My hope is that as we address systemic problems, we also ask ourselves the who, what, and why questions that will help us to address the root of those issues as well.

## *Has one of your fellow committee members or another Spencer Fane colleague inspired your mission to create a more DEI-focused environment? Who and how so?*

I think the beauty of our firm is that I get the chance to be inspired by so many different people on a regular basis. Everyone adds their own, unique perspective to the DEI work and to our firm as a whole. They have helped me to see how I can support those who have experiences that I, as a straight, white female, do not. So, let me say thank you to all of our firm members for their continued support of DEI and for sharing their experiences with us. I also give particular thanks to our entire DEI Committee for their continued passion and work: Jamie Cotter (former), Wale Akinmoladun (former), Mary Bacon, James Crumlin, Bill Hopkins, Heather Morris, Nate Orr, Jeremy Rucker, and DeAndrea Washington – you are greatly appreciated!

# Q & A



**Jessica Gale**  
Partner | Phoenix, AZ

### ***What inspired you to join the ADVOCATE committee?***

After joining Spencer Fane, I wanted to get involved. I was nominated for the Women ADVOCATE Leadership Committee and joined as an associate. Now, I'm a partner and am getting ready to roll off the team in 2023. I'm looking forward to what happens next – the new ideas and new energy for 2023 are really exciting!

### ***What is the best part of being a member of the ADVOCATE committee?***

I get to talk to individuals whom I find interesting and who have different viewpoints. Over the past few years, we've created an amazing open dialogue around topics that impacted us as women, especially during the pandemic when we were seeing the impact on female careers. Then, we're able to take the feedback of those open discussions, create programs, and offer resources to assist in the challenges we've discussed as a group.

### ***What is your favorite ADVOCATE verb – Advance. Develop. Visualize. Own. Champion. Advise. Thrive. Engage. – and what does it mean to you?***

Engage. We've focused on getting everyone at Spencer Fane engaged with our various programs, including our International Women's Day presentations, quarterly meetings that included a book club and mental health presentation, and opportunities to connect remotely or in-person. We're all better off when we establish a sense of community, both in our local offices and across all Spencer Fane markets.

### ***What ADVOCATE project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?***

There are two events I'm looking forward to next year. First, instead of doing our normal December recap meeting, we are hosting happy hour networking events in several of the firm's offices in January. We've opened the ADVOCATE affinity group to everyone, and this is a great chance to bring us all together in person to kick off 2023. I'm also really looking forward to our annual International Women's Day event.



**Stacey Garrett Koju**  
Partner | Nashville, TN

### ***What inspired you to join the ADVOCATE committee?***

I have been engaged in innumerable initiatives, groups, conferences, meetings, retreats, etc., for the advancement of women in the legal profession for nearly 30 years. While many things have significantly improved during this time, women still, unfortunately, face formidable challenges to their advancement in the legal field. I remain committed to eradicating those challenges, and I was elated to join the work of Women ADVOCATE.

### ***What is the most important message or piece of advice you want to give to women at the firm and in the overall legal community?***

SPEAK UP! I have met hundreds of attorneys and professionals at this firm, so I know that we have the most skilled team of advocates possible. Yet, when it comes to advocating for ourselves, women frequently question themselves and remain silent about issues that impact us at work. Rather than doubt ourselves, I hope we take a moment to reflect on who we are and what we can achieve, and we use our voice to speak up for ourselves and other women.

### ***What is your favorite ADVOCATE verb – Advance. Develop. Visualize. Own. Champion. Advise. Thrive. Engage. – and what does it mean to you?***

Champion because it is a boundless concept; championing a woman is one of the most powerful tools that any person, in any position or level of experience, can use to advance a woman.

### ***What ADVOCATE project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?***

I am looking forward to an initiative that permits our partners to deliberately champion a specific woman attorney.

# Women ADVOCATE



**Courtney Davis Powell**  
Of Counsel | Oklahoma City, OK

## ***What inspired you to join the ADVOCATE committee?***

I worked in the OKC office to get the Book Club program off the ground. It has been running now for nearly two-and-a-half years and averages around 15 people a meeting. The individuals we have met and the stories we share are inspiring. After the Book Club, I wanted to find a way to get more involved at Spencer Fane. I also believe in ADVOCATE's mission statement and goals.

## ***What is the best part of being a member of the ADVOCATE committee?***

Honestly, it's getting to meet and work with people from different offices and learn from their experiences. It is a great way to get to really know other people, personally and professionally.

## ***What is your favorite ADVOCATE verb - Advance. Develop. Visualize. Own. Champion. Advise. Thrive. Engage. - and what does it mean to you?***

Develop. To me, "develop" implies a continued state of growth and change. We continue to look for programs and ways to improve, or develop, ourselves, our law practice, and Spencer Fane.

## ***What ADVOCATE project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?***

I am excited about the possibility of more community-based involvement. I think it is important that our communities understand what ADVOCATE and Spencer Fane stand for and what we can do to strengthen them. We can create stronger ties between our home cities and our firm.



**Gulmina Shah**  
Associate | Houston, TX

## ***What is the best part of being a member of the ADVOCATE committee?***

Being a member of the committee allows me to be an integral part of creating an inclusive work environment at Spencer Fane. Not only do we get to represent, lead, and be the voice of our women professionals at the firm, but we are entrusted to examine and make decisions on issues, policies, and practices that directly impact our female employees.

## ***What is the most important message or piece of advice you want to give to women at the firm and in the overall legal community?***

Actively seek mentors and sponsors within the firm or legal community. Good mentors and sponsors can play a vital role to one's professional development and growth. I also believe that having good mentorship and sponsorship helps women to increase their visibility, expand their network, make connections, and advance female talent.

## ***What is your favorite ADVOCATE verb - Advance. Develop. Visualize. Own. Champion. Advise. Thrive. Engage. - and what does it mean to you?***

Champion. I believe that in a male-dominated industry, it's important to have a community where women can champion and support one another. To me, champion means promoting other women as leaders and role models, recognizing and celebrating their achievements, and increasing their visibility among the firm and legal community.

## ***What ADVOCATE project or initiative are you most looking forward to in 2023?***

International Women's Day. I had the opportunity to present at our IWD programming this year and I am looking forward to doing so again next year.

# Sponsorships

As active leaders in the legal industry and our communities, Spencer Fane is compelled by the desire to reach beyond the firm when championing diversity. We lend our support to diversity-focused networks and initiatives not just through membership and volunteering but also through formal sponsorship. From networking events to award ceremonies to educational opportunities, we are honored to financially support DEI networks in their missions.



This year, our sponsorships included:

- Southwest Black Law Student Association (SWBLSA) Job Fair
- Parade of Hearts “Spread Love, Not Hate” Heart
- Nashville Bar Reception to Welcome the Organization’s First Black President, Martesha Johnson Moore
- Zonta Club of Denver Foundation: Brunch and Film Screening
- Center for Women in Law 2022 Women’s Power Summit On Law and Leadership
- The Chabad Center for Jewish Awareness’s Holocaust Remembrance Day
- Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee’s The Power of the Purse
- Announcing our Speaker Lineup - Texas Women Lawyers Annual
- Cafecito 2022 Event by Conexión Americas
- Lhakpa Sherpa’s 10th Summit of Mt. Everest
- JDRF Dream Gala
- South Asian Bar Association of Dallas (SABA) Lunch
- Minnesota Women Lawyer’s 50th Annual Meeting Celebration
- 85th Annual St. Louis County NAACP Freedom Fund Leadership Awards Dinner
- Kansas City Missouri Bar Foundation’s Military Matters VeteRUN 5k Run/Walk
- SABA National Conference
- Lavender Law Conference & Career Fair
- 26th Annual CREW-St. Louis Golf Classic and Networking Happy Hour
- St. Louis Business Journal Most Influential Business Women Awards
- The 2022 ABA Margaret Brent Awards Ceremony and Reception
- Mission Project Independence Walk
- Fresh Start Women’s Foundation Wine Women & Shoes
- The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Foundation (KCMBF) Liberty & Justice Gala 2022
- United WE – We Work for Change
- Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors’ Oye Vecino LIVE Event and Patron Party
- SABA Dallas 6th Annual Benefit Gala
- The Oklahoma Bar Association’s Annual Women in Law Conference
- Women’s Finance Exchange Dallas Chapter Speakeasy Fundraiser
- Houston Business Journal Women Who Mean Business Dinner
- St. Louis Bar Foundation’s Spirit of Justice Celebration
- Women’s General Counsel Network Event/ACC Annual Meeting
- Dallas LEAD Job Board Launch Party
- Legal Services of Eastern Missouri’s Justice Speaks
- Welcome Reception for The Arc Colorado Chapter
- Ellie Mental Health Franchisee Conference



# A Letter from Pat Whalen

As this report details, members of Spencer Fane can take great pride in their considerable and collective efforts to advance the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusivity inside of our firm and in the broader legal profession over the last year. This is doubly true for the members of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Women ADVOCATE Committees, who deserve heartfelt gratitude and admiration for their tireless efforts to chart a course for the rest of us to follow. There is no questioning this firm's good fortune to have such a sincere and relentless group of leaders driving change and progress on a daily basis.

However, I know I echo the voices and sentiments of each committee member when I share that there is much more we intend to achieve as a firm.

As we look ahead, we see opportunities at every turn to have a positive and lasting impact on our colleagues, clients, and communities, including by:

- Doubling-down on cultivating a spirit of inclusivity and belonging at Spencer Fane, including through the creation and advancement of new leadership groups for Black and LGBTQ+ professionals at the firm in 2023;
- Expanding opportunities for self-improvement, reflection, and education on concepts like unconscious bias and inclusive leadership;
- Engaging in meaningful community partnerships that ensure our efforts are not limited to our own firm, but rather serve the good of the entire legal profession;
- Continuously tracking and studying our progress in attracting and retaining diverse professionals, and taking a data-driven approach to engaging with diverse suppliers; and
- Developing the next generation of leaders to ensure our commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusivity outlasts any single individual.

As we set out to realize these ambitions, we will undergo a transition in leadership on our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, as Elizabeth Wentz passes the position of Committee Chair on to James Crumlin. Elizabeth has been nothing short of outstanding in her tenure as chair, and our firm and the profession owe her an unending debt of gratitude. We have been extremely fortunate to be led by Elizabeth, and we have equal good fortune to now follow James into another chapter that will be marked by measurable progress achieved through immeasurable persistence.

We look forward to taking these next steps to creating a more diverse, open, and inclusive profession.

**Pat Whalen**  
Spencer Fane Chair



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Spencer Fane is a full-service business law firm focused on providing results that move clients and their businesses forward. With direct access to firm leadership and a different approach to client engagement, its attorneys instill confidence and certainty that the clients' interests are the firm's priority.

For more information on Spencer Fane DEI initiatives, please visit [spencerfane.com](https://spencerfane.com).