

## Lesley Weaver Participates in Diversity Conference

On June 21-22, BFA Partner Lesley Weaver participated as a panelist at the Duke Law Conference, which held an invitation-only conference series on *Guidelines and Best Practices Addressing Chronic Failure to Diversify Leadership Positions in the Practice of Law*. The conference, held in Denver, Colorado, was coordinated in part by the Bolch Judicial Institute. Established in 2011, the Bolch Judicial Institute dedicates itself to advancing the practice of law through research and innovation, with a focus on law practice reform and improving judicial techniques. One way in which the Institute seeks to address areas in need of improvement is through their Duke Law Conferences, which invite worldwide scholars, practitioners, and justices to contribute to meaningful conversations about the direction of the practice of law.

Ms. Weaver, along with other distinguished conference participants including state and federal judges, scholars, litigators, and in-house counsel, met to discuss the status of the advancement of women in multidistrict litigation and in the legal profession generally. Under the guidance of the Duke Law institute, these volunteers have communed to draft a volume of best practices and strategies to govern the appointment of leadership positions, and talks are underway for possible law reform. The current draft of the proposed guidelines is [available here](#).

Recent studies have shown that the overall average rate of female appointment to leadership positions in multidistrict litigation for the time period 2011-2016 was just 16.55%, as compared to 83.25% of appoints for male. Thirty-seven percent of all multidistrict litigation cases had no females in any leadership position. In addition, the number of women and diverse lawyers attaining partnership in law firms has also remained stubbornly and consistently low for decades, despite an increasing percentage of women and diverse lawyers in the profession.

The Institute is hopeful that these guidelines will provide meaningful benchmarks for jurists seeking to improve these imbalances.