

There Are New Faces Leading MDLs. And They Aren't All Men

BFA partner Lesley Weaver is one of those faces. After performing an analysis of appointment orders for all federal MDL proceedings initiated from 2016 through 2019, Law.com identified that women made up 40% of the 30 lawyers who received appointments in federal MDL proceedings between 2016 and 2019. Lesley made the list with four MDL appointments in that time period, not counting other significant appointments.

Despite this progress, Lesley highlighted that while some firms have done well diversifying leadership of MDLs, others have shown “egregious abuses,” putting women forward for the appointments but not giving them the power to make decisions during the case. That is not the case at BFA.

Moreover, new players have an uphill battle. “Every day, in every interaction, you have to prove yourself,” she said. “That never goes away. Every day is an opportunity to succeed or fail. You have to keep pushing, and you have to continue.”

But the fight to get recognized doesn’t end at getting an appointment, she said. Even after joining the Volkswagen team, she had to compete with veteran attorneys to get work on the case. She had help from key lawyers such as Elizabeth Cabraser, who was lead counsel, but she also used her fluency in German to start investigating connections in the case.

“I ran to the open field and made myself valuable,” she said. “The way you get the repeat is to get people to see you.”

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