

## Trial Lawyer Lynn Neuner Set to Become First Woman to Co-Chair the Litigation Department at Simpson Thacher

Lynn Neuner is set to take the lead of the firm's 250-lawyer litigation department alongside current co-chair Jonathan Youngwood at the turn of the year.

By Ross Todd  
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Simpson Thacher & Bartlett has announced that New York partner Lynn Neuner will become one of the two co-chairs of the firm's 250-lawyer litigation department at the turn of the year, making her the first woman to help head the practice at the elite firm. Neuner, who was inducted into the American College of Trial Lawyers earlier this year, will replace current co-chair, Paul Curnin, who is set to retire at the end of the year.

"I think for the firm it is a breakthrough," said Neuner in an interview in the runup to Monday's announcement. "We now have female co-chairs of our M&A group and our capital markets group. And now I'll be the first female co-chair of the litigation."

Aside from having a busy, broad-based litigation practice, Neuner has been involved in firm management for years. She's currently a member of the firm's executive committee and previously served a three-year stint ending in 2019 as the firm's co-administrative partner. In that role, she helped oversee the day-to-day business of the firm, which has more than 1,000 lawyers and offices in New York, Beijing, Brussels, Hong Kong, Houston, London, Los Angeles, Palo Alto, São Paulo, Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

Neuner says her time as a co-administrative partner was "a really terrific way to get to know the entire firm globally."

"It's like using the MBA side of your brain in addi-



Courtesy photo

Lynn Neuner of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett.

tion to the JD side of your brain, because you're really helping to run a large business," Neuner said. "So this feels sort of like a natural next step for me and I'm really jazzed about it."

The other [current litigation co-chair](#), securities litigator Jonathan Youngwood, said that Neuner "knows the ins and outs of Simpson Thacher and of her partners."

"She brings us an incredible energy and dedication," Youngwood said. "She's going to work extremely hard for all of us."

On that note, Neuner said she continues to be among the top billers in the Simpson Thacher partnership and she doesn't see that changing as she takes on the new management role. "For me, there's no let-up in billable hours. There's no let-up in client work," said Neuner, who reported getting five hours of sleep the night before our interview, an amount she called "pretty good" for her.

Neuner grew up in Rhode Island, the youngest of nine children. ("So yes, a big Irish Catholic family," she said.) With five older brothers and three older sisters, she says she was trained at a young age for "the combat of the trial room."

"I know how to take orders," Neuner said. "My father literally set up wrestling matches among us. And afterward, we would have milkshakes," she said. Neuner brought up the parallels between her upbringing and life as a litigator in a speech she was asked to make during her induction to the American College of Trial lawyers this fall. "We'll fight like heck in the courtroom. But we also know how to put down our armor and go have a drink together and talk about the trials and tribulations of what happened in court that day," Neuner said.

In her own practice, Neuner handles securities and M&A litigation, complex commercial cases including insurance coverage disputes and matters before the National Advertising Division, an arm of the Better Business Bureau that hears fast-moving advertising law disputes. She says she has remained a "generalist" litigator for two reasons: "One, I really like to learn," she said. "I was a closet geek. I like being a student ... I'm the person who spends a lot of time in the museum gift shop because there are so many things that are cool to buy that you could learn from," she said.

The second thing she points to is a conversation she had with former firm litigation chair Barry Ostrager, now a justice on the Commercial Division of the

New York Supreme Court. Neuner says that when she asked Ostrager about whether to specialize, he encouraged her to keep her practice broad. She says he told her: "You're super talented, stay diverse. When one field is in recession, another one will be booming and vice versa. You'll always be in demand that way."

"His point was 'Hey, you're smart enough to do this. It's a way to keep yourself sharp and in-demand,'" she said. Neuner said that she "really responded" to that message and she thinks she's a better counselor now because she sees so many different types of disputes. "When I'm doing defense litigation for securities class actions, I know how to deal with D&O insurance, because I represent insurers. And that makes life much better for the client because I can bring the D&O insurers along and not end up with a big dispute afterward about whether the insurers are going to pay or not," she said.

Neuner says she prizes "a highly collaborative approach" to litigation. She says wants to instill that in the way Simpson Thacher's litigation partners approach growing their business and helping clients solve their biggest problems. "I want every member of the department to have their voice heard from the most junior partner to the most seasoned," she said. "I want to bring people together to collaborate more. I think we would benefit from knowing more about what each other is doing and being able to promote each other's talents," she said.

Neuner said litigation equity partners currently have plans for a retreat in New York in early 2022, and she plans regular lunch group check-ins afterward. "I want us to be talking about business development every single month and just have a lot of open transparency about our numbers and have everyone own our budget and bond together to exceed our goals," she said.