

Miller & Chevalier Taps New Leader Ahead of 100-Year Milestone

By Patrick Smith
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Kathryn Cameron Atkinson, a 27-year veteran of Washington, D.C.-based Miller & Chevalier, has been elected as the firm's newest chair, succeeding Marc Gerson, for a two-year term beginning July 1.

Atkinson has held several leadership positions at the firm over the years, including on the executive committee and as chair of its international department since 2012. She has also served on the firm's compensation, hiring, lawyer development and pro bono committees.

Miller & Chevalier's direction isn't likely to change under her watch, Atkinson said. Founded in 1920, the single-office, 87-lawyer firm has long specialized in federal government-facing litigation, regulatory and enforcement matters for a global clientele. But, she added, "being consistent isn't the same as being static."

She said the firm's deepening of expertise in economic controls, particularly given the current administration's position on China, as well as a renewed interest in representing government contractors, would be two areas of interest.

"Government contracting is an area that has always made sense for us, and we have figured out how to scale it properly," she said. "Strategically, we want to play to our strengths as a local D.C. firm with international clients."

Her predecessor praised the choice of Atkinson to lead the firm moving forward.

"Kate is a truly expert practitioner whose anti-corruption work is recognized around the world," said Gerson in a statement. "Her strategic sense, dedication, and intimate knowledge of the firm from her many years of service will be incredible."

Atkinson also had high praise for Gerson, whose term as chair began July 1, 2017.

"Thanks to Marc, we are positioned to safeguard and build on our strengths as we head into the firm's second century," Atkinson said in a statement.

Atkinson came to Miller & Chevalier straight from Cornell Law School. She handles international corporate compliance

matters and investigations, with particular focus on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and anti-money laundering laws.

As only the second woman to lead the firm in its nearly 100-year history, Atkinson acknowledged there is a lot of work to achieve parity for women in positions of law firm leadership.

According to a survey by the American Bar Association, only 22% of Am Law 200 firms had a female managing partner as of last April. In its annual report on women at major law firms released last month, The National Law Journal found that 23.5% of equity partners were women, out of 59,000 total partners. Women comprised 47% of associates among respondent firms.

"I was in law school when the scales tipped to 50/50, and that was 27 years ago," Atkinson said of the imbalances. "We have to do more than simply be present."

"Sometimes it's just about who is in the room, who gets an opportunity to go on a pitch," she said.

Despite its relatively small size—the firm is ranked near the bottom of The National Law Journal's NLJ 500 (439 in the 2019 rankings)—Miller & Chevalier touts a high-profile clientele that has included the government of Puerto Rico, Transocean, the government of Singapore and Accenture.

According to a firm statement, over the past three years it has represented 40% of the Fortune 100.

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KATHRYN CAMERON ATKINSON
Chair of Miller & Chevalier