

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY:

## WE CELEBRATE THE WOMEN AT BENESCH

### How many years have you been with Benesch?

I have been with Benesch for almost three years.

### What is your practice area and why did you choose it?

I am a partner in Benesch's Litigation Practice Group, where I focus on complex commercial disputes and specialize in defending product liability cases and catastrophic losses for manufacturers. Growing up, I never thought about becoming a lawyer; in fact, I took all the pre-med prerequisites in college with the expectation of going to medical school. But that background in science has been invaluable because being a products lawyer is all about understanding the science behind a client's product or the mechanics of an injury. I've always had a passion for really delving into every aspect of my clients' business to really understand how a product is designed, manufactured, sold, distributed, and ultimately used by the consumer. Thinking through ways to mitigate risks on the front end, and defend against claims of defect and injury on the back end, is an endless mental exercise that makes me love this practice area and the work that I do.

### What are some tips for succeeding in the legal profession?

Know your audience, and don't be afraid to speak up. In the legal industry, as in the business world,



### BARBARA LUM

PARTNER, CO-CHAIR OF  
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND  
INCLUSION COMMITTEE

success is built on relationships. Be thoughtful. Be empathetic. Lead with humility not with demands. Cultivating the emotional intelligence and self-awareness to promote yourself, get a seat at the table, sell your services to potential clients, and advocate for others are key skills that we should all continue to cultivate throughout our careers!

### Tell us about a recent win or career achievement that is meaningful to you.

Joining Benesch as a partner was particularly meaningful to me because the number of diverse women promoted to partner in big law firms remains dishearteningly small. That number is growing though, and it was meaningful to me to play a part in increasing that pool of women leaders. I remain excited and passionate about serving as a role model, mentor, and sponsor for women and diverse litigators. In terms of a recent win, at the end of 2020, I successfully secured a full defense arbitration award for a Fortune 100 technology company against a breach of contract claim seeking damages in excess of \$1 million. The discovery in that case was completed in a matter of months, dispositive motion briefing was completed in a matter of weeks, and the arbitrator's ruling (which issued just before the holidays) was favorable to my client on every point.



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**Leadership positions held at Benesch/in the community:**

At Benesch, I co-chair the Labor & Employment practice group and the DEI committee, and I chair the women's initiative. Outside of Benesch, I serve on the Boards of the Yale Alumni Fund, the Yale Club of Chicago, and the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. I am the former chair of the Coalition of Women's Initiatives in Law, a national bar association for women lawyers. I also served on the Board of the Women's Athletic Club, one of the largest clubs in Chicago.

**What is your practice area and why did you choose it?**

I chose employment law because the practice area gives me the opportunity to become very familiar with the business needs of my clients through counseling work. I help my clients create policies, draft agreements and make employment decisions that enable them to continue to be profitable and competitive. And I really like the fact that my experience with diversity and inclusion initiatives in the legal profession enables me to advise my clients on how to establish effective initiatives within their own companies. Should litigation become necessary, I also enjoy representing my clients zealously and having the opportunity to outwit my opponents. During the pandemic, I found it rewarding to be able to partner with my clients through some very difficult and challenging issues.



**MARGO WOLF  
O'DONNELL**

**PARTNER AND CO-CHAIR, LABOR  
& EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE GROUP**

**What are some tips for succeeding in the legal profession?**

Pick a practice area that you enjoy and become indispensable to your clients. Be responsive and tenacious and create meaningful and long-term relationships. Become involved in leadership positions at your firm so that you can contribute in different ways and get to know attorneys outside of your practice area. I am happy to have the chance to work with the DEI co-chairs at Benesch and appreciate how well we communicate, share ideas, and lead together to create initiatives such as this IWD celebration.

**Tell us about a recent win or career achievement that is meaningful to you.**

Recently, I represented a trading firm and an individual trader in a lawsuit brought by a rival trading firm, claiming trade secret misappropriation and violations of a restrictive covenant. We were able to defeat the opposing party's motions for a temporary restraining order and for a preliminary injunction. The case was immediately dismissed, enabling my clients to continue with their work and business.

Being recognized as one of the 15 most influential women in the legal profession nationwide by *Best Lawyers* was also meaningful to me because I knew that my clients and colleagues had supported my nomination.