

Benesch Partner Marisa Darden and Associate Bianca Smith Named Finalists in Corporate Counsel's 2026 Women, Influence & Power in Law Awards

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Benesch is proud to share that [Marisa Darden](#), chair of the firm's [White Collar, Government Investigations & Regulatory Compliance Practice Group](#), and Associate [Bianca Smith](#) have been selected as finalists for Corporate Counsel's Women, Influence & Power in Law (WIPL) Awards in the Mentor/Mentee category.

This recognition celebrates the dynamic and impactful relationship between mentors and mentees, recognizing a duo whose collaboration exemplifies the power of guidance, support and professional growth. This award honors partnerships that go beyond basic mentorship, fostering moral guidance, social connection and intellectual development. Whether through career advice, skill-building or personal encouragement, this award celebrates mentorship that makes a lasting impact.

"Marisa and Bianca exemplify the very best of what meaningful mentorship looks like in our profession," said Benesch Managing Partner [Gregg Eisenberg](#). "Their relationship reflects a genuine commitment to growth, trust and shared success. We are incredibly proud of the impact they've had on one another and on our firm, and this recognition is a testament to the power of investing in the next generation of leaders."

[Marisa Darden](#)

A former state and federal prosecutor, Marisa advises companies and individuals in civil and criminal investigations and prosecutions brought by law enforcement and regulatory agencies. She has tried more than 15 complex criminal cases to verdict and argued before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Marisa also conducts internal investigations and provides counsel on matters involving the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, bribery, corruption, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and other alleged criminal and civil violations. Her experience includes investigations related to wire and mail fraud, as well as complex financial investigations.

Marisa has been recognized by Chambers USA as a Leading Lawyer in White Collar Crime & Government Investigations, selected to Ohio Super Lawyers and named to Crain's Cleveland Business Notable Litigators and Trial Attorneys list.

[Bianca Smith](#)

Bianca concentrates her practice on white collar defense, government investigations and diverse commercial litigation. She holds a particular interest in sports and entertainment law, vigorously representing clients across the sports industry, from individual athletes to colleges and universities.

Bianca is a trusted advisor in the dynamic landscape of sports law, assisting clients in navigating complex matters such as Title IX compliance, enforcement and investigations. She also specializes in name, image and likeness (NIL) regulation and enforcement, and sponsorship negotiations. She is a frequent speaker and author on these critical issues.

The Women, Influence & Power in Law award winners in each category will be announced at an awards dinner on April 14, 2026, in downtown Chicago.