

# CORPORATE COUNSEL

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## National Women in Law Awards

### RECOGNIZING TRANSFORMATIVE LEGAL LEADERSHIP

These 2018 awards recognize North American women general counsel, in-house leaders and law firm partners who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership and business acumen as they have guided their organizations through often treacherous roads to success. These women stand out because they are business strategists, complex problem-solvers, and of course, great lawyers. And as important (especially to them) is that they are great leaders of people: They care more about the success of the team than their individual success.

## SUSAN W. MURLEY

WILMER CUTLER PICKERING HALE AND DORR LLP (WILMERHALE)  
CO-MANAGING PARTNER - (SINCE 2012)

**WHAT WAS YOUR ROUTE TO THE TOP?** I started my legal career at WilmerHale 32 years ago and was elevated to partner in 1994. I held a variety of leadership positions at the firm before being elected to co-managing partner in 2012. The first of these positions was as chair of the Corporate Department. After 14 years in this role, I became chair of the Transactional Department, which includes the Corporate Department and several other practice groups, and then assistant managing partner a short time later. I also served on the Firm's Management Committee during this time. I gained an intimate understanding of the firm—its practices, clients and culture—and of law firm economics from holding these positions, which prepared me to take on the role of co-managing partner. While pursuing these opportunities, I have benefitted from wonderful mentors, outstanding colleagues and a firm community that holds close our motto: "Great work. Hard work. Team work. A place where everyone counts and they know it."

**WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT? (I.E. WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST BUSINESS-RELATED CONCERNS?)** I take very seriously the industry's and our firm's collective responsibility to recruit and train the next generation of exceptional and

diverse lawyers. The ideas, perspectives, backgrounds, relationships and talents that a group of diverse lawyers brings to any issue helps us develop thoughtful and comprehensive solutions to meet our clients' most complex and challenging needs. At WilmerHale, we are increasingly seeing women take a seat at the table, both in leading matters and leading the firm. A look at the firm's work over the past two years shows 60 percent of our largest investigatory matters were handled by women; of the litigation cases tried by the firm, 50 percent were women led or co-led; and 41 and of the firm's 75 public offerings and Rule 144 placements—which raised over \$30 billion—were led by women. I believe firm culture is an important driver. We are proud of these numbers and this progress, however, it's not enough. Despite designing and supporting several initiatives, we, along with so many organizations, still have a way to go in our efforts to retain and promote more women and lawyers of color.

**WHAT IS THE BEST LEADERSHIP ADVICE YOU PROVIDED, OR RECEIVED, AND WHY DO YOU THINK IT WAS EFFECTIVE?** Early in my career, when I was developing and better understanding my own leadership style, I was often hesitant



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to commit to a certain course of action when faced with a major decision. I would ask myself what past great leaders would have done. This led me to a point where I was questioning my instincts rather than finding resolution in my own judgement. As I struggled with this, a wise person told me to embrace the style that feels true to me and reflects who I am. This was a critical moment for me. As I tuned into my instincts, I found confidence in a leadership style that is all my own—one built on my unique strengths. I believe you must identify and cultivate your interests and strengths to take them to the next level. Good leaders constantly learn, adapt and consistently fine tune. ■