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# Top Women Lawyers 2021

Chalyse Robinson



## AVERY MARTINEZ | LAW WEEK COLORADO

When trying to describe Top Woman Chalyse Robinson, partner at WilmerHale, it can be hard to pin down a place to start. Being a highly successful and busy corporate attorney, Robinson is also a highly motivated member of her community, offering pro bono and volunteer work to organizations of all types — in addition to being a mother, and always willing to try new things.

That desire to try to do new things and help out her community has led to Robinson helping hundreds of small Colorado businesses deal with legal challenges stemming from COVID. Due to her hands-on nature and desire to help, she was instrumental in forming Colorado COVID Legal Relief, which helps to match small businesses with pro bono attorneys in uncertain times.

With a practice that covers corporate areas of private equity, debt and acquisition finance and venture debt, Robinson keeps herself busy with plenty of deals constantly swirling around. Robinson called herself a “deal junkie,” who loves the constant changes day-to-day of her areas and the fast-paced world of her practice.

“I thrive on being busy,” Robinson said. “I’m the kind of person that likes a full plate.”

In her nomination for Top Women, Robinson was described by her firm as an “innovative and pioneering attorney in her own practice.” She’s known for her corporate expertise and her broad range of skills, where she handles multi-billion-dollar transactions out of markets such as New York City.

Robinson said she’s one to lead by example, and never one to ask someone to do something she’s not willing to do herself, which shows in her multiple areas of practice and a vast array of volunteer work she performs.

Her clients cover a wide field of industries from mining to entertainment, retail, healthcare, real estate, life sciences, technology and oil and gas. Even with the pandemic, 2020 was a busy year for Robinson such as leading a team in a merger consideration of over \$1 billion in cash, stock and a seller note.

She has been doing pro bono work reaching from law school to her current career. Robinson said she found some great women mentors as a younger attorney, but it was difficult. By her third year out of law school, Robinson was already a senior woman attorney in her practice area — which continues to be the case.

“She has always been the most senior woman in her practice, from the time she started in this industry, over 15 years ago, through today, but she has been dedicated to changing that and devotes significant time and resources in mentoring and providing opportunities for talented women,” Robinson’s nomination states.

Despite her work in larger companies, when Colorado’s small businesses started to suffer from COVID, Robinson jumped into action. Robinson and her colleague Keith Trammell were instrumental in helping found Colorado COVID Legal Relief, or CCLR.

Robinson said that she and Trammell saw how hard it was for even large companies to deal with the pandemic and legal issues arising from it. “We thought if these kinds of companies are struggling — what’s happening to these smaller businesses without any resources?”

CCLR was specifically created to help small businesses in the state with legal problems resulting from COVID, according to the CCLR website. Offering a free legal help program matching small businesses with legal volunteers and providing free legal webinars and information to these businesses, CCLR is a joint effort of multiple organizations including the Office of the Colorado Attorney General; The Colorado office of Economic Development and International Trade, Colorado and Denver Bar Associations, Colorado Lawyers Committee, WilmerHale, Davis Graham & Stubbs, Messner Reeves and a host of others.

By calling around, Robinson said they were able to find some like-minded people in the Colorado legal community to put together the coalition. The coalition continued to grow, adding resources, and focusing on match-

ing volunteer lawyers to businesses in need, she said. Building up a database of attorneys and a selection process for businesses looking for help, the CCLR has been hosting weekly meetings to keep things up and running.

Starting in April of last year, CCLR has organized a widespread effort to help businesses through their hardships in the pandemic, according to the nomination. CCLR has placed an emphasis on helping small businesses owned by women and people of color, and by April 2021 represented over 225 small businesses in issues from obtaining disaster and financial assistance to employee retention.

“It’s been interesting,” she said, adding that she had volunteered for several cases as well, including landlord-tenant disputes. She said many attorneys have been willing to mentor her as she offers her help to individuals in areas where she has limited, if any, experience.

“And especially now, just because there’s things getting better for some, it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s getting better for all,” Robinson said.

Robinson said that the CCLR program could continue on beyond COVID, with changes, but focused on small businesses.

Her volunteer work doesn’t end there either, she has served on multiple boards in and out of the legal profession including the Legal Aid Foundation of Colorado, Colorado Lawyers Committee, focused on increasing pro bono legal advocacy for disadvantaged communities, the International School of Denver and Bright By Three, a nonprofit providing families with tools to promote children’s healthy development.

She also has taken on volunteer work with helping asylum seekers, drafting and processing loan documents pro bono for the Colorado Enterprise Fund, a nonprofit Colorado-based lending source for small businesses, and to Capital Sisters, an innovative microloan program to women in Afghanistan.

She also made time to participate in weekly webinars as an outside counsel member for the Broadway League and the National Trade Association for the Broadway Theatre Industry, advising on grants offered through the Economic Aid Act.

In her own practice, Robinson said that 2020 was a busy year. She added that at times her schedule was booked for days on end of call-after-call-after call without gaps between. Even at the heights of the pandemic, some normal deal flow continued, but plenty of canceling company work — which used to be the minority of her career.

“The core was helping clients figure out what this whole pandemic meant and how that impacted their business and working through that,” Robinson said.

And even within her own practice, Robinson has been a key figure in guiding WilmerHale clients through the global pandemic. Robinson is a member of the WilmerHale Coronavirus Task Force, a cross-disciplinary team of firm attorneys, and has been actively responding to client needs on legal issues ranging from PPP loans to the Restaurant Revitalization Program.

And besides all of her busy financial work and pro bono efforts, Robinson is also a mother of two children of color. Robinson said she likes setting the example of being involved with multiple interests for both her daughter and son. She said a silver lining to COVID has been the ability to stay home and spend time with them.

In all, Robinson said she really hopes for a day when there’s not a Top Women list of any type, just a Top Attorneys list, where maybe — one day — there will be a room full of award-winning women attorneys with a single male attorney in the mix.

“Her innovative nature has allowed her to build one of the most successful law firm practices in the Rocky Mountain region and attract some of the country’s most recognized companies as clients,” her nomination states. “That, coupled with her leadership in supporting and giving back to the community, make her an asset not only to WilmerHale but to the entire Denver community.”