

# Chicago Chapter

## CHICAGO MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Anne Larson

*Equity shareholder at Ogletree Deakins*



### **Describe what you do.**

I am an employment litigator. My practice has evolved into defending class or collective actions such as claims under the Biometric Information Privacy Act (BIPA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (Section 1981) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII). The latter tend to be disparate impact claims involving alleged discrimination in hiring (i.e., hiring shortfalls based on race or other protected characteristics).

### **When did you first join the Coalition?**

In 2014. Former Coalition President Margo Wolf O'Donnell told me about the Coalition and asked me to join. Margo and I worked together as "Young Leaders" for the Chicago Community Trust's Young Leaders' Fund (YLF). In different years, we ran YLF as that year's Co-Chair.

### **What positions have you held in the Coalition?**

Since 2014, I have been Co-Chair of Programming. I am also an executive board officer and have held the "officer at large" position since 2017.

### **What was your first job?**

My first job was as a waitress, which forced me to go up to tables and engage customers in conversation. It caused me to overcome my shyness. As a young lawyer, I was a law clerk to U.S. District Judge George Lindberg, who was a huge advocate for women and a gracious man, who loved life and people. He gave me the opportunity to write opinions on motions to dismiss, motions in limine and motions for summary judgment. He also had me run jury instruction and settlement conferences and help with evidentiary rulings at trial. It was the most fun I've ever had as a lawyer.

### **What is your fondest career memory or highlight?**

I tried my first jury trial alone in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York before Judge Spatt. He was known as a "trial dog" who ignored all motions for summary judgment and refused to set trial dates. He would call the parties on a Friday and tell you to be in New York to start trial Monday morning. The plaintiff in my case had multiple sclerosis and his son was autistic. His complaint alleged ADA and FMLA discrimination and retaliation

claims. Judge Spatt told my client to settle the case and that we would never win. He recommended an amount, but plaintiff rejected it.

Plaintiff's counsel failed to timely disclose an expert but filed a motion on the trial's first day to belatedly disclose one. Judge Spatt was seriously considering it and offered me the opportunity to depose the expert late at night. I began to feel "hometowned" and asked leave to file a motion to quash. The next day, while the attorneys were in the judge's chambers, I saw a picture of Judge Spatt with Judge Lindberg at "new judge's training school." I pointed out the picture and my judge. Judge Spatt said with gusto: "George Lindberg is my friend." Later that week, my motion to quash was granted and I no longer felt hometowned. When the trial ended two weeks later, the jury returned an "NG" or not guilty for my client.

### **What is the best advice you ever received?**

To answer the phone when clients call, so clients view you as someone they can readily contact. If you cannot have a substantive discussion then, take

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the call anyway but schedule a mutually convenient time to talk. Same for emails. In-house counsel for a Fortune 500 company once told me that it surprises her how many outside counsel forget to ask her how she wants them to communicate with her – e.g., via email, voice mail, phone call followed by a short email, etc. Since then, I make sure to ask such questions.

**What advice you would give to a woman lawyer just starting out?**

Keep your eyes open, see what areas of law (or types of cases) interest you and go do it. Make it happen. Be self-aware about your strengths and weaknesses. Realize that sometimes the same attribute can be a strength and a liability, depending on the situation. Surround yourself with excellent talent and those who shore up any weaknesses.

Tell others what you want to do and ask questions. Figure out who are the best attorneys in areas that interest you and learn from them. If your firm has a Knowledge Management database, use it to the hilt.

Do not worry about things you cannot control. Average 7 hours of sleep per night. If you cannot do that, find ways to get help at home or at work. Take advantage of any “breaks in the action” and fully enjoy your time off. Thank people for their time and generosity and pay it forward. If someone in another Ogletree office has helped me in a pinch, I send them Lou Malnati’s pizzas as a thank you.

**To what do you attribute your success?**

My parents (Dick and Irma), my brother (Mark), my maternal grandmother (Lydia), my husband (Josh) and my assistant (Jodi). Also, an absolute love of reading and learning. Utter tenacity in approaching and solving problems – realizing that getting things accomplished and winning is fun! If a situation is out of my control, I seek advice and help. Can you please help? What would you do? What can we do to get this done or to fix this? In general, I am one to ask questions and always have - since I was a kid. Things frustrate me daily but gratitude and happiness balance it out.

**What’s your favorite Coalition program you’ve attended?**

There are so many. I loved February’s “Fireside Chat with Elizabeth Alexander.” Elizabeth went to law school at Georgetown while serving as press secretary for former Vice President Joe Biden. She is now a crisis management and strategic communications consultant for FTI Consulting. Elizabeth talked about how the #MeToo movement has impacted clients and her work. She also answered questions about the crisis then enveloping the Virginia governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general regarding old photographs in blackface and sexual assault allegations.

**Where do you hope to be in 5 years?**

Traveling the world, reading, exercising daily, and writing a screenplay with my husband Josh Vincent on some of the wackiest experiences we’ve had in life and in law.

**Coffee or tea?**

Green tea. Also, daily wheat grass juice.»

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## CHICAGO UPCOMING EVENTS

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**Seventh Annual Judges Panel**

July 11, 2019

*Hosted by Jones Day*

**Generational Differences**

July 23, 2019

*Hosted by Latham & Watkins*

**Financial Freedom for Women**

September Date and Location TBA

**Peter Bensinger Program, Questioning Leadership**

September 24, 2019

*Hosted by Bartlit Beck*

**10th Annual Leadership Forum**

Fall 2019

*Hosted by Kirkland & Ellis*

**Kendra Scott Jewelry Event**

November 6, 2019