



H | B | S

HALL BOOTH SMITH, P.C.  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Inclusion and Diversity  
Committee

## CONTENTS

- I. Our Commitment..... 1
- II. Overview of our Inclusion ..... 2  
and Diversity Committee
- III. Women’s Forum..... 4
- IV. HBS LGBTQ+ Attorneys  
& Allies ..... 7
- V. Share Wisdom..... 8
- VI. Recruiting and Mentoring ..... 9

H|B|S

# I.

## OUR COMMITMENT

Ever since Hall Booth Smith's earliest days in the 1980s, we have taken great pride in creating and nurturing an inclusive culture for all of our people.

The richness of the ethnicities, viewpoints, backgrounds, experiences and affinities that each of us brings to HBS collectively makes us a stronger firm that is better equipped to serve our clients and achieve excellence.

Our firm was built on a deep commitment to communicating, understanding and respecting each other's differences, and embracing the opportunity to allow the vantage points of others to enrich our own.

To ensure that we continue to seek and welcome people from all backgrounds and ethnicities, HBS has an Inclusion and Diversity Committee that consults on hiring and recruiting initiatives, mentoring and retention, career development, community outreach and other efforts.

We strive to have partnerships and do business with companies, vendors and clients that are also committed to being inclusive and diverse.

We are thankful that professionals from so many diverse backgrounds have chosen to bring their life experiences to the HBS family as they grow their careers, and we will continue to seek diverse perspectives as we add practice areas and expand our footprint.



**Alex H. Booth**  
*Managing Partner*  
HBS Atlanta Office

# II.

## INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

### DIVERSITY STATEMENT

At Hall Booth Smith, P.C. we understand the importance of hiring, promoting and retaining diverse lawyers. We understand that diverse perspectives facilitate better results for our clients and makes our firm a workplace of choice. Hall Booth Smith, P.C. has placed a priority on building an inclusive and diverse workplace.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GOALS

HBS's specific goals for creating a more inclusive and diverse firm are to:

- Enhance recruiting efforts to increase the hiring of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Promote firm-wide initiatives to enhance awareness of and participation in programs such as Mentoring, the Women's Forum, the Hiring Committee, Attorney Development, Staff Development, Community Outreach, etc.
- Provide opportunities for our diverse lawyers and professional staff in:
  - Assisting with the retention of talent
  - Creating mentoring opportunities
  - Developing business opportunities
  - Gaining awareness and fresh perspectives
  - Fostering personal and professional growth discussions

---

The firm's Inclusion and Diversity Committee's (IDC) leadership is tasked with establishing the firm's annual diversity goals and objectives and tracking the firm's progress towards those goals. The IDC also establishes programs and works closely with firm's leadership and human resources to make certain that the IDC goals for diversity are aligned with the firm's overall business plans and objectives.

The committee works with internal liaisons who lead specific initiatives such as the Hiring Committee, Mentoring Program, Marketing, Client Development, Attorney Development, Staff Development, Diversity Awareness and Community Outreach. Each of these groups is working on specific initiatives to enhance inclusion.



**Ashik R. Jahan**  
Co-Chair

Ashik Jahan is a Partner specializing in business and family immigration matters ranging from visas to permanent residency and citizenship; and he has an active workers' compensation practice. Fluent in Bengali, Jahan is the son of immigrants and was born and raised in Tennessee. He is an active member of organizations that support Asians and Muslims.



**Felicia LeRay**  
Co-Chair

J. Felicia LeRay is a Partner in our Atlanta office who co-chairs the firm's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She is actively involved in Atlanta Legal Aid and the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, and she is a member of the Georgia Association of Women Lawyers, Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys and American Civil Liberties Union. Earlier in her career, she was an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Georgia and a trauma nurse at Atlanta's Grady Hospital.



**H. Eric Hilton**  
Co-Chair

H. Eric Hilton is a Partner who specializes in aging services, employment and labor, construction, professional liability and general liability matters. He was previously in-house General Counsel, Senior Vice President and Corporate Secretary for a major construction and real estate development company, giving him first-hand expertise in the complexities of business and law. He was named Outstanding General Counsel in 2012 by the Association of Corporate Counsel and the Atlanta Business Chronicle.

---

Hall Booth Smith has a structured Inclusion and Diversity Committee that identifies and establishes the firm's long-term diversity goals, programs and initiatives.

There are also several subcommittees that focus on specific pillars of our overall program, including:

- Hiring Committee Liaison - Jacquelyn Smith Clarke
- Mentoring Program - Felicia LeRay
- Business Development - H. Eric Hilton
- Mentoring - Roger Martin
- LGBT Outreach - Jacob Raehn
- Community Outreach - Brittanie Browning

# III.

## WOMEN'S FORUM



### **Denise Weiner**, Women's Forum Leadership

Denise Weiner is a Partner in Atlanta, and a leader of the firm's Women's Forum. Her legal practice focuses on construction, general liability, insurance coverage, property/special investigation unit and transportation matters. She has been with HBS for 18 years.

---

**Q: What prompted you and the others to start the Women's Forum?**

**A:** The Women's Forum started to provide the women attorneys at HBS an opportunity to discuss issues in the legal profession that impact women only. We wanted a chance to gather once a month to learn from each other on how to handle specific hurdles to becoming a successful attorney, working mom, and staying healthy all while fulfilling our goal of providing excellence to our clients.

**Q: What sorts of thing does the Women's Forum do?**

**A:** The Women's Forum meets once a month to discuss any issue that is brought to the table that may impact women. We also have 1-3 events throughout the year, where we can meet with our women clients to discuss women's issues that may be impacting them. We also like to give back to the community and participate in fundraising events.

**Q: How are things different/better for women who are just starting their legal careers compared with the challenges you faced when you were starting out?**

**A:** By simply having the Women's Forum it is better. This allows newer attorneys the opportunity to speak to seasoned women attorneys about things they are experiencing and how to handle them. This by itself may help relieve stress for young women embarking on their legal career.



**Beth Boone, Women's Forum Leadership**

Beth Boone is a Partner in the firm's office in Brunswick, Georgia, and she is a leader of the Women's Forum. She specializes in professional negligence and medical malpractice defense, as well as premises liability, probate, estate planning and administration, fiduciary law and general civil litigation.

---

**Q: Why should women belong to affinity groups like the Women's Forum?**

**A:** Networking and educational opportunities through affinity groups like the HBS Women's Forum are one of the easiest and most fun ways a female attorney can connect with colleagues. It is a safe and supportive avenue to learn the ropes and support each other by sharing internal or external contacts, professional knowledge and fresh perspectives.

**Q: Can you share an example of how another member helped you with a professional or personal challenge?**

**A:** Practicing in a small town in a fairly rural area can sometimes be challenging for business development, marketing and referrals. Another female partner recently sent me a fantastic new client that would have been difficult for me to ever reach by myself, and our relationship was key to making that happen. I often speak with other members at the HBS Women's Forum about specific challenges they are facing with cases or their career path and lending an ear to someone also gives you insights and perspective on your own issues.

**Q: If you could go back and give your younger self advice at the beginning of your career about the power of networks and support groups, what would it be?**

**A:** When I first started practicing law in the late 1990s, I was at an all-male firm. Several female attorneys, professors and judges were very supportive in referring me cases, helping me grow my own book of business, sending handwritten notes celebrating my achievements and consoling me during perceived losses. Those acts of compassion took very little time but had an enormous impact on me and I try to "pay it forward" as much as I can.

# III. WOMEN'S FORUM



Hall Booth Smith's workforce has nearly doubled in the past five years and the firm's senior leadership ranks include more women than ever before.



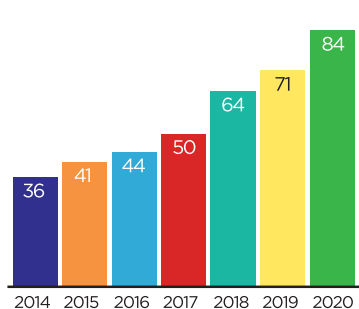
Women hold key positions as partners, associates and paralegals as well as executive management and support roles in finance, marketing, hiring and other operational functions.



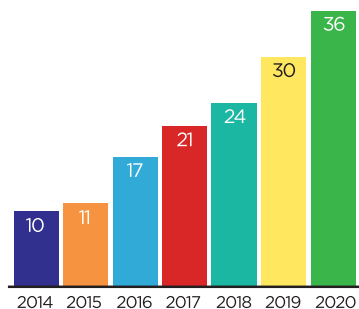
More than one-quarter of all partners are women, a figure that has risen steadily and is five percentage points higher than five years ago.



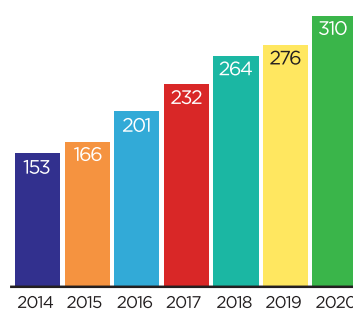
Nearly 32% of all attorneys are women, and that figure has also grown over the years. Across the firm, 60% of HBS employees are women.



FEMALE ATTORNEYS

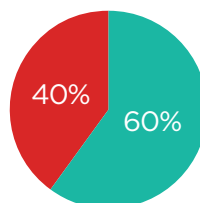


FEMALE PARTNERS



FEMALE EMPLOYEES

FEMALE EMPLOYEES ■  
MALE EMPLOYEES ■



HBS women attorneys and support staff encourage and support each other through both formal and informal mentoring, professional development and continuing education efforts.

The HBS Women's Forum hosts seminars and organizes social gatherings to facilitate interaction and a spirit of cooperation among peers.

HBS attorneys and support staff are also involved in associations and affinity groups that support women and the advancement of women's careers including:

- Albany Association of Women Attorneys
- Association of Women Attorneys
- Atlanta Association of Insurance Women
- Georgia Association for Women Lawyers
- Georgia Association of Black Women Lawyers
- Girls, Inc.
- Lawyers Association for Women
- National Association of Women Lawyers





# IV.

## HBS LGBTQ+ ATTORNEYS & ALLIES

HBS has supported the LGBTQ+ community and LGBTQ+ lawyers for years, and is committed to promoting equality, inclusion and equal rights for all people.

Long before the landmark SCOTUS decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, our policies forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual or gender orientation. HBS provides parity in healthcare, leave, and other employee benefits for all attorneys and staff.

Openly LGBTQ+ lawyers and staff practice in most of our offices, and many of them have active roles within the firm's leadership and administrative committees so they can continue to bring valuable diverse views to our strategic initiatives and business goals. We are proud to have LGBTQ+ attorneys and staff in leadership positions within the firm's practice groups and specialty teams, which helps us provide richer and more diverse insights for the clients we serve.

HBS attorneys and staff are active members and leaders in legal and professional organizations including The LGBT Bar Association, The Stonewall Bar Association, and the Human Rights Campaign's annual tennis tournament, "Serving Equality." HBS offices also host LGBTQ+ and Ally events for national pride month each June, and for city-specific pride weeks throughout the year. Last year, HBS Atlanta was proud to host "50 Years of Pride," a celebration to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, which was an important milestone in the gay rights movement in the United States and worldwide.



## SHARE WISDOM



### **H. Eric Hilton, Partner**

H. Eric Hilton is a Partner who specializes in aging services, employment and labor, construction, professional liability and general liability matters. He was previously in-house General Counsel, Senior Vice President and Corporate Secretary for a major construction and real estate development company, giving him first-hand expertise in the complexities of business and law. He was named Outstanding General Counsel in 2012 by the Association of Corporate Counsel and the Atlanta Business Chronicle.

---

**Q: Tell us about how you were raised, and how your family's values shaped you.**

*A:* I am originally from Washington D.C. My father worked with U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development and my mother served as a Director for the U.S. Dept. of Transportation, Civil Rights Division. I was always taught that embracing challenging situations builds character.

**Q: Have you had any great mentors?**

*A:* This is an apprenticeship profession. I was blessed to start my career at a boutique firm with amazing trial lawyers and marquee clients. On the Monday after my bar results, I was in a trial and the firm's principal told me to "take the next witness." I had 30 minutes to prepare. I learned to trust my instincts.

**Q: You spent a decade as in-house General Counsel at a major real estate company. How does that experience influence how you practice law today?**

*A:* It was a bit like practicing law in a fishbowl. Working in a diversified enterprise with competing internal interests teaches you to be a problem solver in spite of business constraints, while also maintaining your integrity.

**Q: Has the legal profession become more diverse and inclusive since you began your career?**

*A:* We still have a lot of work to do. Women have made notable strides yet African American lawyers and lawyers of color are still underrepresented in the legal profession. Law firms that understand the business case for diversity will be well positioned in the coming years as consumers of legal services demand diversity in their legal service providers.

**Q: What does diversity and inclusion mean to you personally?**

*A:* Law firms should reflect the clients and the communities that those clients ultimately serve. Juries are increasingly diverse in many areas of our Country. In my experience, diversity of perspective creates the best results.

**Q: What changes in overall mindset would foster a more inclusive culture?**

*A:* For some, the moral case for inclusion and diversity will not be enough to move the needle. Understanding the business case for diversity and inclusion will facilitate forward progress. Law firms will follow clients that demand diverse legal representation.

**Q: What advice would you give to a young person who is just starting their legal career today?**

*A:* Pace yourself, stay the course and have patience. Never run from a challenge and never give up. Never quit, and finish the job. Focus on building positive relationships. The seeds you plant now can feed and sustain you in the future.



# VI.

## RECRUITING AND MENTORING

HBS has enhanced its recruitment efforts by seeking diverse candidates for its summer associate program by encouraging applicants from diverse law student groups such as Diversity Coalition, Black Law Student Association, Women Law Students Association, Lesbian & Gay Law Students Association and the Jewish Law Students Association.

The firm is also stepping up recruitment efforts at minority student job fairs such as the Southeastern Minority Job Fair, the Sunbelt Minority Recruitment Program and the LGBT Bar's Lavender Law Conference and Career Fair.

HBS is also interviewing and recruiting second- and third-year law students and recent graduates from more than 50 ABA-approved law schools.

A robust mentoring program is another pillar of our firm's inclusion and diversity initiatives. New associates receive meaningful formal and informal guidance from senior attorneys to strengthen their legal acumen, prepare them for trial, develop tighter relationships with clients and improve their business development skills with prospective clients.

Professional development and continuing education is offered to all attorneys, and the firm encourages them to attend important conferences and association gatherings that will enhance their knowledge and allow them to interact with clients.

IHBS attorneys frequently give presentations or participate in panel discussions at industry conferences or association meetings, and they serve as thought leaders by writing blog posts about legal matters in their practice areas or sharing expert opinions with news media.

## VI. RECRUITING AND MENTORING



### Jacquelyn Smith Clarke, Partner

Jacquelyn Smith Clarke is a Partner in our Atlanta office, and she serves on the firm's hiring committee. She earned a Juris Doctorate from the Walter F. George School of Law, where she graduated in the top 10% of her class, and a Bachelor of Science in government and philosophy, magna cum laude, from Berry College.

**Q: What does an inclusive hiring and recruiting program look like?**

**A:** An inclusive hiring and recruiting program focuses on the plethora of strengths that students and candidates with diverse backgrounds bring to the table. It also implements diverse interviewers and encourages open questions and transparent answers during the interview process.

**Q: How can HBS's hiring committee further strengthen its efforts in the future?**

**A:** By continuing to attend events like the Southeastern Minority Job Fair and supporting on-campus and legal community initiatives that promote diversity in law schools and the profession.

**Q: Can active mentoring programs help in recruiting efforts?**

**A:** Absolutely. Active mentoring is one of the best ways for diverse candidates to experience support and guidance as a student and in their careers, especially in the early years when introductions and networking are especially important in building your reputation and client relationships.



### Kawania B. James, Partner

Kawania B. James is a Partner in our Atlanta office who also serves on the firm's hiring committee. She earned a Juris Doctorate, cum laude, from the University of Georgia School of Law, and she holds a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice, cum laude, from the University of Georgia.

**Q: What is HBS's hiring committee doing to ensure that a diverse group of candidates are being pursued?**

**A:** With regard to law students, HBS participates in the Southeastern Minority Job Fair to ensure we are being introduced to diverse candidates. The hiring committee also makes an intentional effort to assess each candidate that applies through a structured process to help reduce any potential unconscious bias from the hiring process. Life experiences and academic achievement are the top considerations for all candidates.

**Q: What sorts of things do candidates care about the most as they are considering offers?**

**A:** In addition to pay and compensation, candidates are looking for professional development and work-life balance. They want an environment where they can grow their career and develop skills, with active mentoring and training opportunities.

**Q: How are things different for women who want to make a career in law nowadays than a generation ago?**

**A:** So many amazing women worked hard to make a legal career a viable option, but there is still a long way to go. Women only represent 37% of the legal profession, and that's not reflective of the broader workforce. Now, there are more organizations that help women attorneys connect and support each other, such as the HBS Women's Forum. Technology like smart phones and cloud-based files also help women juggle work life and home life in ways that didn't exist for earlier generations.

## MENTORING SUBGROUP COMMITTEE



### **Roger Martin, Partner**

Roger is a Partner in our Atlanta office, and he is a leader in the firm's mentoring program that connects newer members of the firm with senior partners. In the program, partners work with their mentees to make introductions and provide networking opportunities throughout the firm, assist them on taking advantage of firm resources and provide hands-

on support on client matters. Mentors also serve as advocates to support career development and provide other informal coaching to strengthen the younger person's professional and interpersonal skills.

The mentoring program serves as a conduit for communication with senior leadership so younger employees can express any concerns or challenges to their mentor in a safe environment. This also lets HBS leadership stay apprised of how younger employees are getting acclimated, and how they can better support the development and training of new employees. At its core, the mentoring program is platform for learning for all members of the HBS family so we can provide excellent service to our clients.

H|B|S

HALL BOOTH SMITH, PC  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Inclusion and Diversity  
Committee

[WWW.HALLBOOTHSMITH.COM](http://WWW.HALLBOOTHSMITH.COM)

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of multiple overlapping, wavy lines in various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, creating a sense of motion and diversity.