

## Genova Burns Partner On Leading NJ Women Atty Group

By Nick Muscavage

*Law360 (July 15, 2021, 3:58 PM EDT)* -- The New Jersey Women Lawyers Association recently tapped a Genova Burns LLC partner who has a passion for advancing women in the legal industry to serve as its new president.

Dina M. Mastellone was sworn in as president of the NJWLA on July 8. She is planning on taking her 18 years of experience at Genova Burns — where she chairs the human resources counseling and compliance practice group — to help the NJWLA elevate qualified women to the highest levels of law firm, government, academic, community and corporate positions.



Dina M. Mastellone

Prior to joining Genova Burns, Mastellone served as an assistant corporation counsel for New York City's administrative law division, where she successfully defended challenges to the city's laws and regulations in state and federal cases, and prosecuted criminal matters on behalf of the corporation counsel's office.

Over the course of her career, Mastellone has gained extensive experience training businesses and human resources organizations on matters involving anti-harassment and diversity policy compliance, as well as in best practices in hiring, managing, discipline and termination, according to Genova Burns.

Before being named president, Mastellone served as the NJWLA's vice president, co-chief financial officer, co-secretary and the co-director of its judicial outreach committee, according to the firm.

Leading the NJWLA as its president is "the honor of my professional career," Mastellone said as she was sworn in, according to a statement from the group announcing her presidency. She said the association is a "remarkable group of accomplished female attorneys who mentor, support and lean on one another, a sisterhood of attorneys striving for justice, equity and inclusion in this profession."

Law360 Pulse recently spoke to Mastellone to learn about her plans for the NJWLA. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### What skills do you think you bring to the NJWLA?

My goal as a leader in this profession is to do my best to educate and mentor the next generation, to

help them reach the highest levels in their careers. As lawyers, we learn the value of your voice in advocating for our clients. We learn the value of working hard, learning your place in the process and always remembering who you are representing and serving. Those attributes are what I hope to pass on to our next generation of female leaders in this profession. But there is also power in standing up and saying "no," especially as a woman. It is when you really listen to your instincts, you can clearly hear your inner voice.

My affiliation and leadership roles in NJWLA and the New Jersey State Bar Association helped me find my voice, which has helped me not only become a better advocate for my clients but also for myself and for women in this profession. I'm a better lawyer today because I surround myself with accomplished and fearless women, and I am grateful to work with organizations that empower women to use their voice for change.

### **What goals do you have for the NJWLA and how do you plan to accomplish them?**

Our goal in the upcoming year is to refocus on our mission by using our voices to advocate for societal change as well as change in the firms and the companies we work for. A recent article in the ABA Journal spoke about the lack of upward mobility by women in the profession as a systemic issue that needs to be faced head-on when it comes to the promotion and retention of women lawyers.

Our programming this year will focus on assisting female attorneys, especially minority women, to reach the highest levels in law firms, government, and the private and public sectors, whether that is increasing the number of women in equity partnerships, in management and leadership roles in their firms or their companies, or having a seat on the judiciary. We are also committed to continuing NJWLA's diversity and allyship initiatives with ongoing courageous and sometimes uncomfortable conversations. It is through collaboration with the NJSBA and the diversity bar organizations that we can begin to see changes in this profession.

We also need to address what work-life balance looks like in the "new normal." How do we remain front and center in the firms and companies we work for and how can we continue to assist with the professional development of junior attorneys in a remote hybrid world. Giving back to our communities while moving the organization forward is also a focus. As Justice [Ruth Bader] Ginsburg so eloquently reminded us, "If you want to be a true professional, you will do something outside yourself, something to repair tears in your community, something to make life a little better for people less fortunate than you."

### **How will you tap into the experience from your human resources counseling and compliance practice in your new role at NJWLA?**

As an HR attorney, a primary focus is on collaboration, whether it's counseling employers on how best to establish human resource policies and procedures, or how to handle complaints of harassment and discrimination, or serving as my firm's point Human Resources Partner responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations of the firm's internal human resource issues.

Collaboration also requires listening to what your clients' business needs are and building a relationship where they trust your guidance and advice. Collaboration also involves assisting with peer mentorship to assist attorneys in meeting their personal and professional goals so that attorneys will become invested in their own and their firm's success and growth and develop pride in its achievements, which, in turn, fosters high levels of employee satisfaction.

Those skills will benefit NJWLA, so we can increase collaboration with our board and our membership to create programming and initiatives that focus on mentorship and diversity initiatives to support and advance the women and minority attorneys in this state through mentoring, networking and marketing by encouraging them to be leaders in professional and civic organizations.

### **Do you believe serving as president of the NJWLA will bolster your existing practice?**

Anything you do in terms of professional, community or civil organizations bolsters your practice as an attorney. The leadership skills you acquire by leading an organization, advocating for yourself, through self-promotion and networking also helps and is a crucial driver to success and fulfillment in this profession. Taking the discussions we have at NJWLA will only assist our firms and the clients we work for to implement initiatives, policies and benefits that promote the diversity and inclusion. In addition, the ongoing discussions within NJWLA about work-life balance will greatly assist all of us with providing counseling and advice to our clients as the traditional employment landscape is changing drastically right before our eyes.

### **If you could have lunch with any lawyer, living or dead, who would you choose and why?**

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg's visit to my law school 23 years ago as a visiting professor left an indelible mark on my legal career. As managing editor of the Touro Law Review, we were assigned the Herculean task of editing the lecture Justice Ginsburg gave at our school titled, "Reflections on Way Paving Jewish Justices and Jewish Women." 14 Touro L. Rev. 283 (1998). In her remarks, Justice Ginsburg stated, "The traditional commandment 'Justice! Justice! Shalt thou pursue' ... are posted on a wall in my chambers, an ever present reminder of what judges must do."

Justice Ginsburg believed in the law as "protector of the oppressed, the poor, the minority, the loner." Those words have stuck with me my entire legal career. I'd like to thank her for her lifelong service to justice, the judiciary, this profession and her fight and commitment to gender equality and women's reproductive rights. I would ask her how she found the courage to make decisions that were sometimes unpopular, her friendship with Justice Antonin Scalia and ask for advice and pointers on how to collaborate with those who may not share your views or ideology.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.