

RHODE ISLAND WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION **NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER**

Note from the Newsletter Committee: This month's newsletter articles share a focus on issues related to election process, psychology and history. We took to heart Abigail Scott Duniway's thoughts that, "The young women of today, free to study, to speak, to write, to choose their occupation, should remember that every inch of this freedom was bought for them at a great price. It is for them to show their gratitude by helping onward the reforms of their own times, by spreading the light of freedom and of truth still wider. The debt that each generation owes to the past it must pay to the future." Happy Voting!



Image: Smithsonian

UPCOMING EVENTS:

RIWBA's annual Newsmaker Event will be Thursday, November 19, 2020. We're thrilled to announce that Lara Montecalvo, Rhode Island Public Defender will be our featured Newsmaker! Check your inbox soon for additional details about this event!

November 17, 2020, 12:30 - 1:30 pm

Presentation on RI Federal Court Practice

In case you missed RIWBA's discussion with Chief Judge McConell, the Rhode Island Bar Association is hosting a presentation by Judge McConell on Federal Court Practice tips and guidance with respect to the court's response to COVID-19. Register [here](#).

November 18, 2020, 1pm

Join NAWL for a Conversation on Change focused on Advocating for Yourself While Working from Home.

Jennifer Thibodaux, a Senior Legal Editor for Thomson Reuters Practical Law, and Kirsten Silwanowicz, Assistant General Counsel at Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation in Detroit, Michigan will be discussing how to adjust your own

work structure, establishing boundaries for a better work/life balance, and advancing your career while working from home. Register for this event [here](#).

RI Bar Association Survey. The Rhode Island Bar Association has convened a Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce. Please take the time to fill out the survey sent to all members of the bar and available [here](#).

Ada Sawyer Centennial Celebration. Ada Sawyer was the first woman to pass the Rhode Island bar examination. Although the centennial celebration of her accomplishment has been postponed to October 2021, the planning committee is asking Bar members who may have known or been influenced by Ada, or who may have had doors opened as a result of her actions, to submit a short piece detailing how they were affected. Submission information can be found [here](#).

MEMBERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS:

Andrea L. Merolla-Simster has been named partner at Gidley, Sarli & Marusak, LLP. Andrea's practice focuses on civil litigation with a specialty in medical malpractice defense. Congrats, Andrea!

We hoped you enjoyed the RIWBA co-sponsored event honoring the 100th year anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which featured a virtual tour of the special traveling ABA exhibit and discussion regarding women's right to vote. What an important milestone to commemorate!

Thank you to our members who attended our discussion with Chief Judge McConnell and Judge Mary McElroy of the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island. It was a unique opportunity to have a candid conversation with the judges about the challenges facing RIWBA members in the profession.

Please see the recent RI Supreme Court [Order](#) on the Temporary Admission of Military Spouses.

Want to brag on one of your fellow members? Including yourself? Email Jessica Rider at jrider@riag.ri.gov so that we can include those accomplishments in a future edition!

ARTICLES AND RESOURCES OF INTEREST:

Coping With Election Stress. Tips from a Psychotherapist can be found [here](#).
(*Shondaland*)

The New Generation of Poll Workers. High school and college students are politically engaged and stepping up to replace older poll workers who are more at risk. [Learn](#) more about various programs around the country that help train young volunteers. (*NY Times*)

How To Fix an Error on Your Mail-In Ballot. Hopefully this won't be relevant! But, just in case, this [article](#) contains information on how to "cure" your ballot. (*Time*)

A.C. v. Gina Raimondo. Judge Smith's opinion on whether there is a constitutional right to an adequate civics education is nuanced and well worth a read. Available [here](#).

Could the Third Amendment Provide A Way Forward in the Pandemic? This [article](#) considers whether there is a right to be protected from infection. (*Atlantic*)



The Art of Voting. This [article](#) shares select images from a book of stunning election posters. (*Its Nice That*)

Why Do People Vote? This [article](#) discusses "electoral psychology," the study of why people choose to vote or not. "Weak altruism" and social pressure are the main reasons for voting. It is important to recognize that political disenfranchisement is a major reason people do not vote, creating a looping problem suppressing the voice of disenfranchised groups (*Medical News Today*)

Election Litigation Tracker. Check out SCOTUSblog's tracker which keeps tabs on election related cases at all levels of the court system. See [here](#) for the latest status.

Faithless Electors. This [article](#) addresses what happens if an elector goes rogue and what the relevant July 2020 SCOTUS opinion means in this context. (*Reuters*)



How to Create an Inclusive Hiring and Workplace Culture at Your Small Business. please see the article by Zina Sutch, attached at the end of this newsletter.

Have a valuable article or resource for our membership? Email Leigh Furtado at LFurtado@heklawllp.com to add it to next month's edition!

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Are you hiring? Know someone looking for a top-notch applicant for an open position? Email Jenna Giguere at jenna.giguere@dbr.ri.gov to add an opportunity to our employment section!

MONTHLY MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

The Monthly Member Spotlight is your cheat sheet to the incredible women who are your fellow RIWBA members. Keep an eye on your inbox, because you might be next!

This month, we are delighted to spotlight **LEIGH FURTADO**, an associate at Howland Evangelista Kohlenberg LLP. Read on to learn more about Leigh!

Any good work from home tips? Buy the fancy coffee machine you've been considering. Nespresso has been key to surviving working from home with a 3 year old running around.



What is one goal you'd still like to accomplish in your lifetime? I have a list of National Parks that I would like to visit in my lifetime. I made it to Yosemite last fall and it reinvigorated my commitment to this goal.

If we peeked into your fridge, what would we see? So much seltzer. It's even worse this time of the year when they reveal new seasonal flavors.

Can you share something about yourself that others would be surprised to learn? I have 27 first cousins. I loved growing up with a large extended family, but it also helped me learn to navigate different personalities and family disagreements. That's come in handy in my trusts and estates practice!

In fifty words or fewer, describe what you want other RIWBA members to know about your practice. My practice focuses solely on estate planning and estate administration. I really enjoy working with clients to identify their priorities and transform those goals into a plan that will help their families for generations. Some of the most meaningful moments of my career have occurred when helping a client through the loss of a loved one. I'm glad I can ease some of the administrative burden at that point in someone's life. Plus, there is never a dull moment when dealing with families and there is always something to learn in this area of practice.

NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE:

Have something you would like to see in the next newsletter? Let us know by November 30th to include it in the latest edition. And as always, thanks for reading!

RIWBA Referral List: We are preparing an internal referral database. If you would like to be included, please email your name, contact information and up to 3 areas of practice to Aubrey Lombardo at alombardo@hcllawri.com

Leigh Furtado, Jenna Giguere, Jessica Rider, Stephanie Simon & Sam Vasques

RIWBA Newsletter Committee



HOW TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE HIRING AND WORKPLACE CULTURE AT YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

Contributed by Lana M. Glovach, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
Authored by Zina Sutch October 6, 2020 on www.sba.gov at <http://ow.ly/UdUE50BOesT>

This National Disability Employment Awareness Month, learn more about the benefits and steps of hiring individuals with disabilities at your small business.

Employees with disabilities bring immense value to their workplaces. Just ask Oowee Products – a leather manufacturer and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan recipient. The Asheville, North Carolina-based business, which makes handcrafted beverage accessories, works with the Autism Society of North Carolina to provide jobs to people with autism. Through economic modeling, research conducted by Accenture, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) “found a strong correlation between financial performance and well-developed disability-inclusion practices.”

Inclusive work environments like Oowee Products provide all qualified employees – including those with disabilities – the flexibility they need to shine. These workplaces embrace the differences that make each employee unique and exceptional. In doing so, they benefit from increased employee satisfaction and productivity. Small business owners can take the following steps to make their workplace more inclusive.

Develop an Inclusive Hiring Process

The first step to establishing an inclusive hiring process is to write a job description that outlines the specific accommodations that you’re willing to provide to help workers successfully perform their job. During the recruitment process, you should ensure that individuals with disabilities can take part in the process effectively. This may require you to provide accommodations, such as adjustments to a job, work environment, or interview process. According to the Harvard Business Review, it may be surprising, but most accommodations cost nothing and when a cost is involved, it is usually less than \$500.

You can also tap relevant organizations to find qualified hires with disabilities. You can find a comprehensive list of organizations on our website, but here are a few initial ideas:

- ○ Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs): WDBs connect companies to the resources they need to strengthen their business and their workforce, including skilled employees with disabilities.
- ○ American Job Centers: American Job Centers help with recruiting, hiring or training employees, including people with disabilities who are ready and willing to work.
- ○ Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN): EARN offers a list of online job posting boards that can help small businesses find qualified workers with disabilities.

Once you have an interview on the books, be sure to read this U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guide to make sure you are following all necessary guidelines for interviewing employees with disabilities. For example, there are certain questions you cannot ask job applicants regarding their disabilities or medical conditions.

Changing the standard interviewing process and assessment practices that tap into the skill sets you are seeking can also overcome some of the barriers that people with disabilities may experience in the interview process. A small business can be more confident in their ability to find strong candidates and make quality selections when using a variety of assessments that may better reflect the candidates' strengths.

Create a Culture of Inclusivity

Beyond establishing an inclusive hiring process, it is also important to foster an everyday workplace culture of inclusivity. This may entail offering accommodations (e.g., screen reading software, raised desks, flexible work schedules, etc.) to employees who need them.

Businesses can take advantage of financial incentives to make reasonable accommodations, such as the following federal tax incentives:

- ○ The Work Opportunity Tax Credit, available for hiring individuals from certain groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.
- ○ The Barrier Removal Deduction, which allows businesses to deduct up to \$15,000 for making a facility or public transportation vehicle more accessible.
- ○ The Disabled Access Credit, a non-refundable credit for small businesses that incur expenditures for the purpose of providing access to persons with disabilities.

Consider providing all employees, especially those in supervisory roles, training on creating inclusive cultures, understanding challenges that colleagues may be facing, and the types of accommodations that are available. Increasing awareness and knowledge helps reduce the stigma that is often associated with having a disability, which assists in making everyone feel like they belong.

By investing in recruiting, hiring, and retaining talent – including people with disabilities – you can make your business more productive, and create a more satisfying work experience for your employees. For more hiring help, connect with a local SBA resource partner.

As Benjamin Franklin observed, “if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” Let the SBA help your small business plan for success! Assistance is available in languages other than English, including Spanish, and all SBA programs and services are extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. To learn more about the SBA's programs and services, please contact Lana M. Glovach, SBA Economic Development Specialist, at lane.glovach@sba.gov or 401-528-4575, or visit www.sba.gov/ri