

Phillips Lytle names Marks diversity partner

■ BENNETT LOUDON

Attorney Kelly E. Marks has been named diversity partner at Phillips Lytle LLP.

In the newly created position, Marks will focus on the development, coordination and implementation of the firm's strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives for the firm and in the broader legal community.



KELLY E. MARKS

Marks, who also leads Phillips Lytle's tax practice group, is a member of the firm's governing committee and will chair the firm's DEI steering committee to build a

more diverse, inclusive workforce.

Marks received her bachelor's degree and master of business administration degrees from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She received her law degree from Albany Law School, and an advanced corporate tax certificate from New York University School of Law.

Phillips Lytle has demonstrated a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion for decades. In 1990, the firm launched the Phillips Lytle Diversity Scholarship at the University at Buffalo School of Law, one of the first scholarships of its kind in the nation.

Over the years, the firm has increased its investments in several

other initiatives aimed at expanding diversity within the legal profession, and its attorneys have provided significant pro bono service to disadvantaged communities.

"Our talent-driven growth plans prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion," said managing partner Kevin M. Hogan.

"For years, we have focused on building a more diverse workforce for the legal industry, and now we've placed even greater emphasis on diversity as a central business objective," he said.

"We seek to cultivate an inclusive environment where our colleagues are supported and can do their best work. We look to recruit diverse attorneys and invest in talent pipelines that connect to diverse communities," Marks said.

"A diverse, inclusive and equitable workforce fosters creativity and growth, enabling us to deliver exceptional results for our clients while engaging meaningfully with our communities," she said.

Phillips Lytle's DEI work centers around three key actions: recruiting, developing and promoting diverse attorneys and staff, she said.

The firm engages in national minority recruiting efforts, supports diversity scholarship programs, encourages attorneys to share ideas to ensure that policies contribute to an inclusive and equitable culture, provides robust training programs, responsive mentorship and competitive compensation packages, she said.

Marks explained that, although the firm has been committed to DEI efforts for many years "this is such an important goal for us that we wanted to reinvigorate our efforts and show the firm and our clients and our community that we're really placing a great deal of emphasis and importance on DEI matters and felt like having a partner who was responsible for that was really key to us facilitating our goals."

"One of my long-term goals as diversity partner, especially for this year, is to have a more formal training for partners and senior associates on how to be a better mentor and ally to diverse attorneys as a way to get them closer to us and more connected so they might be less likely to take that call from the headhunter and the other firm," she said.

Phillips Lytle also is applying what is called equity impact analysis to most decisions as a tool to examine what sort of ripple effect any decision will have on DEI efforts.

As part of the decision-making process Phillips Lytle will ask how diverse groups will be affected by items under consideration, and whether the diverse groups are adequately represented in the decision-making process.

"We're trying to implement that decision-making process for everything from how we choose folks who are practice group leaders or who are serving on firm committees to project staffing," Marks said.