



BELL NUNNALLY PARTNER ALANA ACKELS RECOGNIZED AMONG DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL'S "40 UNDER 40"

February 14, 2019

Bell Nunnally Partner Alana K. Ackels has been named among the "40 Under 40" in 2019 by the *Dallas Business Journal*. She will be honored at an awards dinner on March 21 and featured in the March 23 print edition.

"As a firm, we congratulate Alana on her selection. Her dedication to client service, the community and helping advance the legal profession truly make her a rising star," said James Skochdopole, Bell Nunnally managing partner.

Ackels was selected after the review of several hundred nominations by a judging panel comprised of past winners from a wide-swath of industries and roles in the private, public and non-profit sectors. She joins past Bell Nunnally honorees Christopher B. Trowbridge (2012) and R. Heath Cheek (2013).

Ackels is a member of Bell Nunnally's Labor, Employment and Benefits; Litigation; and Workplace Culture and Misconduct Investigation practices. Alana works for companies of all sizes, advising them on how to minimize risk, protect key business assets, and navigate the state and federal laws governing the employer-employee relationship. Ackels also prepares employment contracts, confidentiality and non-competition agreements, employee handbooks and other key employment policies. She also guides employers through the process of opting out of workers compensation in Texas by crafting injury benefit plans, managing the rollout, consulting on difficult claims, and handling litigation when it arises. Alana assists employers in difficult terminations, conducts workplace investigations, provides strategic advice for successful corporate transitions, manages reductions in force, counsels clients on difficult leave of absence issues, and audits companies for compliance with wage and hour laws.

In the litigation setting, Ackels defends employers in claims involving discrimination, harassment, unpaid wages, trade secrets, and non-compete matters. She also handles complex business disputes, non-subscriber negligence claims, certain employee benefit challenges under ERISA, and insurance coverage disputes.

Highlighted in Ackels' nomination is her ongoing commitment to fostering greater gender parity and inclusion and seeing more women equity partners in the law. She serves on the Steering Committee of Bell Nunnally's Women's Initiative, which promotes the retention and advancement of women in the firm and the community. Ackels also works with the firm's female attorneys on business development, mentorship, communication style, community involvement and work-life balance.

Active in the community, Ackels serves on the board and is the fundraising chair for Women With Promise, a North Texas-based non-profit led by a diverse group of successful business women. In addition to providing a scholarship fund for non-traditional female students who are seeking to break the cycle of poverty in their families, Women With Promise supports other local agencies with time, leadership and monetary donations to assist women in need.

Honored by her legal peers, Ackels is featured in "The Best Lawyers in America 2019" and was named to D Magazine's "Best Lawyers Under 40 in Dallas" List in 2018. She has also been featured in *Texas Monthly* as a "Texas Rising Star" every year since 2015.

Ackels earned both her law and undergraduate degrees at Southern Methodist University (J.D., *cum laude*, 2009 and B.A., *cum laude*, 2006).

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Related Practices

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