

National Association of Women Lawyers Names M.C. Sungaila to Board

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PRACTICES Appellate

The National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) has named Mary-Christine “M.C.” Sungaila, a partner and appellate litigator with Haynes Boone, to a three-year term on its Board of Directors.

NAWL’s mission is to provide leadership, a collective voice and essential resources to advance women in the legal profession and advocate for the equality of women under the law. This aligns well with Sungaila’s efforts to secure women’s rights worldwide.

At age 29, Sungaila helped win a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, which reinstated a criminal civil rights verdict against a state court judge who had abused his power by raping and sexually assaulting female court employees and litigants. Sungaila has provided free representation in at least one appellate case annually since 1996, resulting in significant victories at the international, national and state levels.

Take, for example, an Inter-American Court of Human Rights decision against Mexico for the disappearances and killings of women and girls in Ciudad Juárez. This has been lauded as one of the most important women’s rights decisions in decades and the first to interpret a women’s rights treaty.

Sungaila has also successfully briefed and argued appeals raising cutting-edge and core business issues. She recently secured three wins in cases argued over three consecutive months before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Sungaila previously served for a decade on the Women Lawyers’ Association of Los Angeles’ Board of Directors, and chaired its Amicus Committee. She also serves on NAWL’s Amicus Committee, which reviews and drafts amicus briefs on issues important to women and girls, such as domestic violence. On behalf of NAWL and other bar and public interest organizations, Sungaila recently drafted two amicus briefs: one before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in a case challenging the constitutionality of the Superior Court’s policy of reviewing newly e-filed unlimited civil complaints to prevent disclosure of information made confidential by law before releasing them to the public, which underscored that allowing access to unlimited civil complaints from the moment they are filed would undermine the privacy rights of certain litigants, particularly tenants in eviction proceedings and victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault; and a second before the Second Circuit, in a cutting edge case that will test the parameters of liability for dating apps that help facilitate abuse and third party harassment and assault.

“I have admired M.C.’s work and dedication to pro bono appellate matters for many years,” said Sarretta C. McDonough, NAWL president. “As NAWL focuses on protecting the constitutional framework and precedents that have furthered women’s rights and our advancement in the profession, she was an obvious choice to help lead that important work.”

Sungaila has been extensively recognized by a variety of publications and groups, including the Orange County Women Lawyers' Association, which named her Attorney of the Year in 2017. In 2017 she was also awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, whose recipients include seven U.S. Presidents, Nobel Prize winners, athletes, leaders of industry, artists and others whose work has made a lasting impact on humanity, for her combined professional achievements and humanitarian and pro bono work. She has been named one of the Top Women Lawyers in California by *The Daily Journal* nine years running (2010-2018). She has repeatedly been named a "Notable Appellate Practitioner" by Chambers USA, Chambers & Partners (2013-2018) and was a recipient of two back-to-back California Lawyer of the Year (CLAY) awards, including one in 2015 from *California Lawyer* magazine, Daily Journal Corporation, for the precedent-setting franchisor vicarious liability case she argued before the California Supreme Court, *Patterson v. Domino's Pizza*.