

2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

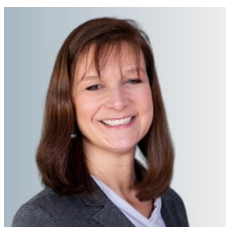


Amy M. Stewart

Leadership Forum Program Chair
Stewart Law Group
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Amy M. Stewart is a distinguished trial attorney and Founder of the only minority and woman-owned business litigation defense firm in Dallas-Fort Worth. Recognized as one of the top three attorneys in Texas by *Texas Lawyer* in 2022, she represents multiple Fortune 100 clients in commercial, employment/labor, investigations, and product liability matters. She is also a certified Arbitrator with the American Arbitration Association, FINRA, and is recognized as a distinguished neutral with the International Institute for Conflict Prevention and Resolution.

Amy and her firm, SLG, made history by conducting the country's first-ever Zoom summary trial during the pandemic in 2020, and she continues to be a trailblazer in the legal field. This summer, Amy will receive the prestigious Terry Lee Grantham Memorial Award from the Texas Bar Foundation for her servant leadership to the legal profession. Finally, in 2026, Amy will serve as the Chair of the American Bar Association's Litigation Section, leading the nation's largest association of litigators and trial attorneys.



Donna Lamontagne

IADC President
Lamontagne, Spaulding & Hayes, LLP
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Donna Lamontagne is a Founding Partner of Lamontagne, Spaulding & Hayes, LLP in Cranston, Rhode Island, circa 2015. The firm is wholly female-owned and defends national insurance companies, their insureds and members, as well as self-insured entities and corporations. Donna has been trying civil jury and bench trials in state and federal courts in Rhode Island and Massachusetts for more than three decades. She also does insurance coverage work and arbitrates or mediates countless civil matters each year in the areas of tort, contract, products, employment, and construction litigation.

Donna and Tom have three daughters, Cayce (22), Annie (22), and Mary (21). The family is grateful for their IADC friends and memories.

2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS



Elizabeth Sorenson Brotten

Foley & Mansfield PLLP

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Liz Sorenson Brotten is a partner of the Minneapolis office of Foley & Mansfield and serves on the firm's Executive Committee. Liz leads regional and national teams in defending product liability and toxic tort claims pending throughout the Midwest and across the United States. Outside of litigation, Liz counsels clients on legislative efforts and case management initiatives aimed at efficient and cost-effective management of mass tort litigation. Liz is the Chair of IADC's In-House and Law Firm Management Committee and President of the Minnesota Defense Lawyers Association. An Academic All-American distance runner in college, Liz enjoys competing in races and traveling. She has completed the Boston, Chicago, and Twin Cities marathons.



Nicole M. Brunson

A. O. Smith Corporation

Milwaukee, WI USA



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Nicole Brunson serves as Associate General Counsel - Business Operations for A. O. Smith Corporation where she serves as the primary contact for U.S. business operations and oversees the litigation and ethics and compliance functions. Nicole's diverse background in physical science, law, and sales and management provides a strong foundation for her role as a trusted strategic advisor/ partner to her clients.



Before joining A. O. Smith in 2024, Nicole served as global of Head of Litigation & Disputes at ARRIVAL, Associate General Counsel, Commercial Litigation Americas for Trane Technologies, and Associate General Counsel, Litigation for Ingersoll Rand. She also worked as an associate with Swanson Martin & Bell, LLP, a boutique litigation firm in Chicago, Illinois.

Nicole is active in the Association of Corporate Counsel since 2012 and served as President of the Charlotte chapter in 2020. She has been active with DRI since 2007, IADC since 2014, and FDCC since 2022. She is a certified mentor with Mentor Collective and has earned the elite ACC In-House Counsel Certified (ICC) designation.



2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

	<p>Nicole is a 2006 graduate of Indiana University School of Law - Bloomington (n/k/a/ Maurer School of Law) and 1998 graduate of Xavier University of Louisiana (BS Biochemistry). She obtained an MBA in Marketing and Management from Christian Brothers University in 2002. Nicole is a life member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.</p>
	<p>Xiao Chang <i>Cisco Systems, Inc.</i> <i>Dallas-Fort Worth, TX USA</i> xiali4@cisco.com</p> <p>Xiao Chang is Associate General Counsel, Director in the IP litigation group at Cisco Systems, Inc. She manages a part of Cisco's busy global patent litigation docket, which involves defending lawsuits by NPEs, from the filing of suit through appeals. She also tracks litigation in the AI space and participates in working groups relating to GenAI and data strategy. Before joining Cisco, Xiao practiced patent litigation in New York City at Desmarais LLP and Kirkland & Ellis LLP. Xiao received a B.S. and M.S. in Biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania and her J.D. from Stanford Law School.</p>
	<p>Jennifer L. Greenblatt <i>Goldman Ismail Tomaselli Brennan & Baum LLP</i> <i>Chicago, IL/Dallas, TX USA</i> jgreenblatt@goldmanismail.com</p> <p>Jennifer is a partner at Chicago-based litigation boutique Goldman Ismail Tomaselli Brennan & Baum LLP. She is a trial lawyer whose diverse practice defending pharmaceutical, medical device, and other science-based companies spans complex product liability, commercial, and antitrust litigation. Jen is repeatedly ranked in <i>Chambers USA</i> and <i>Legal 500</i> for her strong track record in multi-district litigation, particularly in the healthcare and life sciences field. She has served as lead or trial counsel in actions across the country involving radiology dyes, herbicides, building materials products, IVC filters, cholesterol medications, potassium supplements, osteoporosis medicine, and more.</p> <p>Jen received her B.S. in policy analysis and management with a concentration in health care from Cornell University and her J.D. from Stanford Law School. Before joining Goldman Ismail, Jen represented both plaintiffs and defendants</p>


2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

	as an associate at Susman Godfrey LLP and completed a Ninth Circuit clerkship.
	<p>Christopher C. Lam <i>Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP</i> Charlotte, NC USA clam@bradley.com</p> <p>Chris Lam, a partner in the Charlotte, NC office of Bradley Arant Boult Cummings, has a nationwide litigation practice focused on business litigation and product liability defense. He is lead North America product liability counsel for a Fortune 200 manufacturer and also represents public corporations, middle market companies, start-up businesses, and individuals in state and federal courts across the country. Chris has been recognized in <i>Chambers USA</i>, <i>Best Lawyers in America®</i>, <i>Super Lawyers</i>, <i>Legal Elite</i>, and <i>Benchmark Litigation</i>. He has held numerous leadership roles within the IADC, including serving as Chair of the Business Litigation and Engagement and Retention Committees, and Convention Chair in 2023 with his wife, Anne. In addition to the IADC, Chris has held leadership roles in several other professional organizations, including office managing partner, president of the Mecklenburg County Bar, co-chair of the North Carolina Bar Association's Administration of Justice Committee, Trustee of North Carolina Humanities, and member of the Board of Visitors for Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy. He earned his undergraduate degree from Duke University, where he was a Benjamin N. Duke Scholar and Truman Scholar, and his law degree from the University of North Carolina, where he was a Chancellors Scholar.</p>
	<p>Veronica M. Lei <i>Eli Lilly and Company</i> Indianapolis, IN USA veronica.lei@lilly.com</p> <p>Veronica M. Lei is Assistant General Counsel - Lilly Diabetes Alliance at Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis, Indiana where she provides strategic legal advice to product development and brand teams for the Lilly-Boehringer Ingelheim Global Diabetes Alliance. In her prior roles at Lilly, she led a global, internal privileged investigation team consisting of attorneys dedicated to examining the company's highest risk and most complicated matters. Veronica also directed the company's defense of litigation with and</p>


2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

	<p>investigations by external entities, specifically in the areas of pharmaceutical pricing and in response to federal and state government requests for information. When she first came to Lilly, Veronica advised on issues relating to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and counseled her company's Ethics and Compliance function. Before joining Lilly, she was an Assistant U.S. Attorney for more than six years in the Boston U.S. Attorney's Office, specializing in asset forfeiture and financial investigations. She began her career as a litigation associate at Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP (now Dentons) in Chicago and then clerked for the Honorable Morris E. Lasker on the U.S. District Court in the District of Massachusetts. Veronica graduated from Harvard University School of Law and from Columbia College, Columbia University.</p> <p>Veronica serves on the Board for Girls Inc. of Greater Indianapolis.</p>
	<p>Lanesha Minnix <i>Walgreens</i> <i>Chicago, IL USA</i> Lanesha.minnix@wba.com</p> <p>Lanesha Minnix is executive vice president and global chief legal officer for Walgreens Boots Alliance. Lanesha oversees the company's global legal, compliance, corporate governance, and corporate security function.</p> <p>Minnix previously served as Executive Vice President, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary for Ecolab Inc., the global leader in water, hygiene, and infection prevention solutions and services operating in 170 countries, where she led all legal, compliance, regulatory, government relations, and SH&E matters for the company.</p> <p>Minnix serves on the Board of Directors for Advanced Energy Industries, Inc. (NASDAQ: AEIS). She is a member of the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) and National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD). She holds a juris doctor and an MBA from the University of Tulsa, and a bachelor's degree in marketing from St. Louis University.</p>
	<p>Scott Minnix <i>The SDM III Group</i> <i>Chicago, IL USA</i> scottdminnix@gmail.com</p>

2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

	<p>Scott Minnix is a trusted executive advisor, strategic problem-solver, and thought leader with a proven track record of leading multi-billion-dollar organizations and helping professionals and teams achieve peak performance. As CEO of The SDM III Group, he works with law firm partners, general counsel, corporate executives, and government leaders to enhance leadership effectiveness, optimize decision-making, and drive real organizational impact.</p> <p>Scott has walked the walk as a leader, overseeing complex, high-stakes operations in some of the largest public and private sector organizations in the country. In Houston, he served under Mayors Annise Parker and the late Congressman Sylvester Turner, leading multi-billion-dollar departments responsible for operations, infrastructure, procurement, and risk management. In Los Angeles County, he reported directly to the Board of Supervisors, overseeing initiatives that improved organizational efficiency, governance, and public sector performance across the nation's most populous county.</p> <p>But Scott's true calling is helping leaders and organizations reach peak performance. He doesn't just teach leadership—he systematizes it with a disciplined, structured approach that produces measurable results. His framework for leadership transformation has helped executives, law firm leaders, and high-performing teams achieve significant operational and cultural breakthroughs.</p>
	<p>Charles Price <i>Eaton</i> <i>Cleveland, OH USA</i> charliedprice@eaton.com</p> <p>Charlie Price serves as litigation counsel for Eaton Corporation, a global technology leader in power management solutions. He oversees the company's toxic tort and environmental litigation. In 2017, he partnered with University of Akron School of Law to develop and teach Winning Before Trial, a course that integrates principles from law, statistics, communications, psychology, economics, and other fields to help students improve their litigation judgment and decision making. He's also a visiting instructor for the Kessler-Eidson Program for Trial Techniques at Emory University School of Law.</p> <p>Since joining Eaton in 2016, Charlie has taken an active role in nurturing and developing the next generation of legal professionals. Among other efforts, he has partnered with CWRU School of Law as a member of the Dean's</p>

2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

	<p>Diversity Cabinet to address the historical lack of diversity in the legal profession. He also works closely with the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's Council on Conscious Inclusion workgroups and committees to help empower legal entities with practical tools to improve the recruitment, retention, and advancement of diverse legal professionals.</p> <p>Charlie is an avid writer and speaker on litigation and DEI topics, and is the author of the Winning Before Trial litigation blog. Finally, he is an award-winning board game designer.</p>
	<p>Michele Smith <i>MehaffyWeber</i> Houston, TX USA michelesmith@mehaffyweber.com</p> <p>For more than 25 years, Michele Y. Smith has represented clients in complex litigation matters. Her practice has spanned a wide variety of areas including products and premises liability, pharmaceutical, commercial, and construction defect litigation. She has also represented a variety of businesses in sophisticated mass tort causes of action involving numerous chemical substances and exposures. She currently serves as the Immediate Past President of the International Association of Defense Counsel. She is the current Chair of the firm's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee.</p> <p>Michele is Board Certified in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization and is well known in the legal community for her leadership skills across multiple legal organizations. She has served as a past president of the Texas Association of Defense Counsel, a past president of the Jefferson County Bar Association, and a past president of the Jefferson County Young Lawyers' Association. She is an Advocate member of the American Board of Trial Advocates.</p> <p>She has been recognized in <i>Best Lawyers®</i> and as "Lawyer of the Year" in Beaumont for Product Liability Litigation - Defendants (2015), Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants (2017), Insurance Law (2017, 2023, 2025), Litigation - Insurance (2024), and Mass Tort Litigation/ Class Actions - Defendants (2019). She has also received the President's Award by the Texas Association of Defense Counsel (2010) and has been selected to the <i>Texas Super Lawyers</i> List by <i>Thompson Reuters</i> every year since 2005.</p>

2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS



Thomas W. "Trea" Southerland, III

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Trea Southerland is Lead Counsel – Corporate Integrity & Compliance for Federal Express Corporation. Trea is an authentic and proven leader focused on protecting corporate brand, finances, and reputation through strategic litigation, proactive compliance controls, and internal investigations. He is an experienced and successful first-chair litigator skilled in trial practice and developing, implementing, and teaching corporate policies and procedures designed to mitigate risk up front. He is also a trusted and sought-after legal adviser and business partner delivering action-oriented and business-need solutions ethically and responsibly.

He served on the IADC Board of Directors from 2019 to 2022, is a current Co-Chair of IADC's Leadership Advisory Council, and a past recipient of IADC's Joan Fullam Irick Exceptional Leadership Award.



Aldos L. Vance

Vance Dispute Resolution, PC


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Al Vance is the founder and managing partner of Vance Dispute Resolution, PC where he specializes in strategic problem-solving, mediation, and arbitration. He is a registered mediator and arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association, and a mediator for the International Institute for Conflict Prevention & Resolution, Alabama State Court Mediator Roster, Alabama Appellate Mediator Roster, ADR Panel of Neutrals for the Northern District of Alabama, and a member of the Alabama Academy of Attorney Mediators.

Al has extensive expertise in several areas, including personal injury, product liability, professional liability, workers' compensation, and employment matters. He was an award-winning General Counsel for Altec Industries, Inc., the aerial device industry leader, and also served as Associate General Counsel for Altec, Inc. Before joining Altec, Al began his legal career in 2000 at the law firm of Starnes Davis Florie, LLP, where he later became a partner. He is a licensed member of both Alabama and Georgia state bars.

2025 IADC LEADERSHIP FORUM SPEAKERS

	<p>Al earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Alabama School of Law and a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Auburn University. He serves as a Hearing Officer for the Alabama State Bar's Disciplinary Board and is a member of the Alabama State Bar Board of Bar Commissioners. He holds an AV Preeminent Martindale Hubbell Rating.</p>
	<p>Andrew Wallace <i>NTE Mobility Partners LLC</i> <i>Dallas, TX USA</i> awallace@northtarrantexpress.com</p> <p>Andrew Wallace is General Counsel, Chief Compliance Officer, and Secretary to the Boards of Directors for the North Tarrant Express and LBJ TEXpress Lanes, the three (3) North Texas concession companies affiliated with Cintra, US, a world leader in infrastructural development. Mr. Wallace is a member of the leadership team for Cintra's North Texas Concessions, where he manages all of the legal affairs and compliance matters for the concessions and provides advice and counsel to the Executive Team, the Compliance Committee, and the Boards of Directors. Mr. Wallace graduated from Georgetown University where he received his undergraduate degree in Government/International Relations. He graduated from Georgetown University Law Center and received his MBA from the University of Texas at Arlington.</p>