2026 Women's Initiative Program

October 28, 2026 | Westin River North| Chicago, Illinois

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

The power of women supporting women is not just a feel-good idea, it's a force for real change. A woman's success should be celebrated, not compared. Instead of competing for a single seat at the table, we should be building a bigger table together. Today will be a day to explore women supporting women and how collaboration is stronger than competition.

ALFA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S INITIATIVE PRACTICE GROUP LEADERSHIP



Denise Baker-Seal
Women's Initiative Practice Group Chair
BROWN & JAMES, P.C.
Belleville, Illinois



Melanie Gassler-Tischlinger
Women's Initiative Marketing Chair
GPK PEGGER KOFLER & PARTNERS
Innsbruck, Austria



Ellen Nimaroff
Women's Initiative 2026 Program Chair
LESTER SCHWAB KATZ & DWYER, LLP
New York, New York



Christin Krämer
Women's Initiative Chair Emeritus
TIEFENBACHER
Heidelberg, Germany

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

8:30 A.M.– 11:00 A.M. BREAKFAST & MAHJONG – LEARN, PLAY AND CONNECT

The Westin River North – Promenade Ballroom ABC



Mahjong is a classic tile-based game that combines strategy, skill, and social connection. Often compared to a blend of rummy and poker, the game is played in small groups and encourages conversation, teamwork, and a little friendly competition! Coffee and a plated breakfast will be served prior to play as food is not permitted at the table with the mahjong tiles.

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Plated Breakfast
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Mahjong!

Attire: *Casual attire*

12:30 P.M. – 1:30 P.M.

PACK WITH A PURPOSE: WOMEN'S INITIATIVE REGISTRATION, BUFFET LUNCH & COMMUNITY GIVEBACK

Westin River North – Riverfront Room

Please join us by packing with a purpose as you travel to Chicago by supporting Sarah's Circle. Sarah's Circle provides a full continuum of services for women, including housing, life necessities, and supportive services, to help them permanently end their homelessness. The most needed items are NEW bras and underwear in small, medium and large sizes or you can assemble donation kits with requested essentials that can be found HERE. Toward the conclusion of lunch, a representative from Sarah's Circle will give a brief presentation regarding the organization's mission and impact. We hope you will join us!

1:30 P.M. – 1:40 P.M.

WELCOME TO THE WOMEN'S INITIATIVE PROGRAM



Denise Baker-Seal
Women's Initiative 2026 PG Chair
BROWN & JAMES, P.C.
Belleville, Illinois



Ellen Nimaroff
Women's Initiative 2026 Program Chair
LESTER SCHWAB KATZ & DWYER, LLP
New York, New York

1:40 P.M. – 2:25 P.M.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: THE AUDACIOUS PIVOT: REDEFINING POWER, PURPOSE, AND THE COLLECTIVE RISE OF WOMEN IN LAW



In the legal profession, we are often taught that success is a solo climb—a relentless pursuit of billable hours, academic accolades, and the stoic endurance of societal expectations. But what happens when the milestones you were promised don't lead to fulfillment, or when life's unpredictable detours threaten to silence your voice? Join **Precious L. Williams— CEO of** Pitch Perfect Group, 13-time national elevator pitch champion, 5-time bestselling author, and former NYC attorney—for a high-octane keynote designed to shatter the "good girl" rules of the legal industry. Precious doesn't just talk about survival; she embodies a Glow Up born from the fires of homelessness, heartbreak, and professional reinvention. In this session, Precious reveals how her own transformation was fueled by the women who refused to let her shrink and why "Women Helping Women" is the most powerful strategy for market dominance. She will challenge you to put down the crushing weight of others' expectations and pick up the weapon of strategic audacity. Attendees will learn how to:

- ***Release the Weight:*** Shed the performative roles that drain your energy and step into your sovereign identity as a legal powerhouse.
- ***Master the Big Ask:*** Stop waiting for permission and start demanding your worth by asking for the help and resources you deserve.
- ***Fuel the Collective Glow Up:*** Transition from a "Dime a Dozen" practitioner to an indispensable authority while lifting other women into their own greatness.
- ***Rewrite the Script:*** Transform past mistakes and professional detours into a bold new narrative of triumph and profitability.

The "perfect time" to claim your crown is a myth. Your second act isn't a sunset—it's a takeover. Are you ready to pivot with audacity?

2:25 P.M. – 3:25 P.M.

BUILD, PIVOT AND PROSPER: NAVIGATING EVERY STAGE OF THE CLIMB

The ALFAI Women's Initiative PG is comprised of women with varying years in the legal field and differing experiences navigating life in a law firm. What advice do these lawyers have regarding flourishing at a law firm and developing a client base? Furthermore, while workplace culture has changed over the last two generations, what areas still need to be addressed? We hope this conversation is interactive as insights from all attendees are valuable!



Margaret Metzinger
Moderator
FRANTZ WARD
Cleveland/Columbus, Ohio



Michelle Storm
MONACO COOPER LAMME & CARR, PLLC
Albany, New York



Stephanie Ramia Sandifer
CLEMENT RIVERS, LLP
Charleston, South Carolina



Amanda Loughmiller
QUILLING, SELANDER, LOWNDS, WINSLETT & MOSER, P.C.
Plano, Texas

3:25 P.M. – 3:45 P.M. BREAK

3:45 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

LISTENING TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAWYERS: WHAT YOUNG LAWYERS NEED TO STAY AND SUCCEED

What do young lawyers want from their careers, their supervisors, and their firms? This program will feature honest perspectives from early-career attorneys on mentorship, workload, flexibility, advancement, and the factors that shape retention. The conversation will offer practical ideas for leaders who want to better support and retain emerging talent.



Janelle Kilies
Moderator
LEWIS WAGNER & TRIMBLE
Indianapolis, Indiana



Rebecca Bergkamp
HINKLE LAW FIRM LLC
Wichita, Kansas



Madison Preston
NAMAN HOWELL SMITH & LEE, PLLC
Austin, Texas



Job Fickett
TAYLOR, DAY, GRIMM & BOYD
Jacksonville, Florida



Elisa Lemus
BUFETE BARRILERO
Bilbao, Spain



Kristen Allison
MAYER LLP
Houston, Texas

5:00 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS

5:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M. NETWORKING RECEPTION

Westin River North – Grand Court

6:30 P.M. – 9:30 P.M. ABM REGISTRATION & WELCOME RECEPTION WITH DINNER



Chicago Winery
739 North Clark St
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Welcome Reception
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Family-Style Dinner

A Winery in the Heart of Chicago - Chicago Winery offers a chef-driven dining experience complemented by its small-batch, on-site wines. The menu features thoughtfully crafted, seasonal dishes designed to pair seamlessly with their curated wine selections.

Transportation: The venue is a 13-minute walk (.6 miles) from the hotel. If you wish to walk or rideshare with other attendees, meet in the lobby at 6:15pm.

Attire: Upscale casual, smart attire

FACULTY BIOS

KRISTEN ALLISON is a trial attorney with Mayer LLP, the ALFA International member firm in Houston, Texas. Kristen's practice focuses on civil litigation. She represents corporate clients in a wide range of matters, including personal injury cases arising from auto accidents, premises liability, Dram Shop (liquor liability) claims, wrongful death, gig economy, and industrial workplace injuries. Her experience also extends to products liability and construction defect litigation, as well as contract disputes.

DENISE BAKER-SEAL is a principal with Brown & James, P.C., the ALFA International member firm in Belleville, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri. Denise counsels clients inside and outside the courtroom on employment and complex litigation matters. She regularly defends employers in state and federal cases alleging harassment, discrimination and retaliation claims and offers guidance and training to help employers minimize the risk of workplace misconduct. Denise also handles cases involving catastrophic injuries, primarily in premises liability, product liability and transportation matters. In addition to her skills as a litigator, Denise is experienced in effective dispute resolution alternatives and regularly represents clients in mediations and arbitrations. She also serves as an arbitrator in several forums.

REBECCA BERGKAMP is a member attorney at Hinkle Law Firm LLC, ALFA International's member firm in Wichita, Kansas. Her practice is focused in the areas of civil litigation, commercial & complex litigation, transportation & motor carrier litigation, medical malpractice, and construction litigation. She also represents clients before various regulatory agencies, including the Kansas Dental Board, the Kansas Veterinary Board, and the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts. In support of the firm's insurance defense practice group, Rebecca is involved in the full range of property and casualty matters, insurance coverage issues and critical occurrence investigations.

JOB FICKETT is an attorney with Taylor, Day, Grimm & Boyd, ALFA International's member firm in Jacksonville, Florida. He is an experienced litigator. Combining persuasive writing, tenacity in the courtroom, and an aptitude for problem-solving, Job's practice is focused on offering creative legal and business solutions across numerous litigation practice areas. Job also regularly advises entrepreneurs and small-to-midsized businesses from start-up phases through corporate governance issues and best practices for litigation avoidance. He is admitted to practice

in all state and federal courts in Florida. In his career, Job has represented general contractors, subcontractors, banks, real estate brokerages, bankruptcy and personal trustees, software developers, insurance carriers, grocery stores, law firms, medical device manufacturers, charter airlines and family businesses, to name a few. He has significant experience representing both plaintiffs and defendants. Before joining Taylor Day, Job was an attorney at a regional business litigation boutique and started his career at a nationwide litigation firm.

JANELLE KILIES is a partner with Lewis Wagner & Trimble, the ALFA International member firm in Indianapolis, Indiana. Since joining the firm in 2012, Janelle has been instrumental in preparing and presenting numerous mock trials and innovative focus group presentations in complex and catastrophic injury cases and serves as a jury trial consultant alongside partner Dina M. Cox. Her mock trial programs are individually tailored to client goals — whether testing case themes, training witnesses, or evaluating case value — and her reports provide actionable insight into juror perceptions to support better trial and settlement decisions. Janelle also heads the Firm's Labor and Employment Group, concentrating on the defense of employment-related claims, including employment discrimination, wage disputes, wrongful termination, employment agreement disputes, unfair labor practices, and civil rights claims. She also provides proactive prevention counseling on employment issues, including drafting employment policies and practices and navigating employee discipline and termination.

ELISA LEMUS is an Partner with Bufete Barrilero, the ALFA International member firm Spain. Elisa specializes in the renovation and reorganization of workforces, including the elaboration and development of collective redundancies, the reduction of hours at work, temporary suspensions at work, as well as individual dismissals and substantial modifications in working conditions. She also gives assistance and legal representation in court, dispute resolutions and extrajudicial negotiations. Elisa also renders legal advice to companies in crisis and enrolled in insolvency proceedings, as well as derivative debts in the acquisition of independent productive or commercial activities during the liquidation phase. As far as immigration law is concerned, she is an expert in expatriation policy and international postings. Elisa is currently the Chair of the ALFAI European Regional Group.

AMANDA LOUGHMILLER is an Equity Shareholder of Quilling Selander Lownds Winslett and Moser, P.C., ALFA International's member firm in Dallas, Texas, where her practice focuses on defending corporations, credit unions, financial institutions, debt collectors and consumer reporting agencies in consumer and commercial litigation. She is also a seasoned mediator resolving complex business litigation matters, relating to breach of contract, bankruptcy, the Fair Credit Reporting Act, Fair Debt Collections Practices Act, and Telephone Consumer Protection Act. She earned her B.A. at Baylor University in 1997 and her J.D. from Texas Tech School of Law in 2000. She is admitted to practice law in all Texas state and federal courts, various federal courts across the country, as well as the 4th, 5th and 11th Court of Appeals. She is an active member of the ALFAI Business Litigation Practice Group Steering Committee and the Women's Initiative Steering Committee.

MARGARET METZINGER is an attorney with Frantz Ward, the ALFA International member firm in Cleveland & Columbus, Ohio. She is chair of Frantz Ward's Women's Initiative which prioritizes the recruitment, promotion, and mentoring of women attorneys through leadership training, networking, and community involvement. Maggie has over 30 years of experience representing clients in a wide variety of matters including estate and trust litigation; estate planning; probate; and estate and trust administration. She provides counsel to clients at every stage of life, from recently married couples and young families to business owners and retirees. Maggie has extensive experience in estate planning as well as wrongful death matters, will contests, trust disputes, and obtaining guardianships for both minors and adults. She also serves as a mediator for the Cuyahoga County Court.

ELLEN NIMAROFF is a partner at Lester Schwab Katz & Dwyer, LLP, the ALFA International member firm in New York, New York. She manages a team of defense attorneys in general liability, transportation and construction litigation. She represents professionals in liability litigation, including real estate managers, insurance brokers and

agents, security companies, staffing consultants, software developers, title agents, medical professionals, travel agents, hair salons. She also represents national insurers in complex insurance coverage disputes. She analyzes insurance coverage issues, renders opinions for insurers and defends and prosecutes declaratory judgment actions. She received her BA degree from Wellesley College and her JD from Brooklyn Law School.

MADISON PRESTON is a member of Naman Howell Smith & Lee, PLLC, the ALFA International member firm in Austin, Texas. Her practice focuses on civil and commercial litigation, including transportation, personal injury, wrongful death, premises liability, gig economy, dram shop, employment, property, construction defect, and general liability defense matters. Madison represents clients in state and federal courts throughout Texas.

STEPHANIE RAMIA SANDIFER practices primarily with the Employment and Labor Law practice group at the ALFAI member firm in Charleston, SC, Clement Rivers, LLP. Stephanie assists both public and private employers in employment matters, including day-to-day employment issues, federal and state litigation, as well as proceedings before administrative agencies such as the EEOC, SC Human Affairs Commission, and the NLRB. Stephanie also has experience in representing clients in corporate dispute matters, asset purchase deals, personal injury, premises liability, professional liability matters, and Medicaid and Medicare appeals. Prior to joining Clement Rivers, she served as a Staff Attorney for the South Carolina Supreme Court. In law school, she worked for the South Carolina Senate Judiciary Committee. Before law school, she worked for a large international business and litigation law firm in Washington, DC.

MICHELLE STORM is a partner at Monaco Cooper Lamme & Carr, PLLC, ALFAI's member firm in Albany, NY. She is a seasoned attorney with a robust and diverse litigation and transactional practice. Michelle is known for her strategic mindset, meticulous preparation, and strong presence – representing clients across New York in matters ranging from high-stakes liability claims to multimillion-dollar real estate transactions. Her practice focuses on complex civil litigation, including medical malpractice and trucking defense, business litigation and corporate transactions, and commercial real estate and real property law. Michelle is currently the Regional Chair of ALFAI's Future Leaders Practice Group and has been named to both SuperLawyers and Best Lawyers in America.

PRECIOUS L. WILLIAMS is not just an author and international professional speaker; she is a high-impact catalyst who transforms communication from "trash to straight cash". As a 13-time national elevator pitch champion and the CEO of the Perfect Pitch Group, Precious has built a global reputation as the secret weapon for Top Fortune 100 corporate sales teams, law firms, and global business leaders. A proud graduate of Spelman College and Rutgers Law School, Precious uses her foundation in law and business development to train others to own their "wow" factor and become the only choice that matters. Her clients have collectively won millions in pitch competitions, secured lucrative corporate contracts, and trained enterprise sales team to #slayallcompetition while directly translating her "pitching genius" into measurable financial success. Precious's expertise is sought after by the world's most prestigious organizations and media outlets. She has delivered world-class training for global brands such as Google, Microsoft, Verizon, BMW, Blackstone, and NBCUniversal. From an academic standpoint she is a frequent guest speaker at Harvard University and Columbia University. She has also become a media icon, featured on ABC's "Shark Tank," CNN, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and Black Enterprise.