

LAW WEEK

COLORADO

TOP WOMEN LAWYERS

Katie Reilly

Antitrust lawyer and women's 'grit and growth' advocate



BY TONY FLESOR
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Katie Reilly, a partner at Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell and an advocate for “grit and growth” for women in the law, has made big changes in her career.

Reilly began her career at Wilmer Cutler & Pickering in New York, but 10 years ago, she made a move to Colorado in pursuit of a more active, outdoors-focused lifestyle. She said she wasn't in love with the law at the time — her career in BigLaw was a means to pay off her debt before she would pursue a second career as a high school English teacher. After her move West, though, that all changed.

She started work at Jacobs Chase. Within her first year at the firm, she had 50 depositions and worked on a case that went to a two-week jury trial. Through that experience, she found her passion for the law. The active involvement

in cases at the Denver firm was a stark contrast to her experience of being a young associate in a large coastal firm.

After becoming partner and then transitioning to Husch Blackwell with nearly two-dozen other Jacobs Chase lawyers, she made the second biggest and scariest move of her career: joining Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell as counsel. She said it was a big risk to attempt to establish herself in a new firm, but she was attracted by the strength of its litigation platform. She has since become a partner at WTO.

Reilly now anchors her practice in Colorado-based commercial litigation. “Where there's fighting between businesses, I tend to be involved in those areas,” she said.

A sample of those cases includes a trademark dispute between two marijuana edibles companies, EdiPure and Green Cross Colorado, over the use of the name EdiPure. Green

Cross had filed an ex parte motion for a temporary restraining order, claiming trademark and trade secret violations. Reilly got the restraining order lifted so EdiPure could continue doing business and got a preliminary injunction denied. She is now pursuing an abuse of process claim on behalf of her client against Green Cross Colorado. She is also involved in the defense of three au pair agencies in a major antitrust lawsuit challenging the entire U.S. au pair industry.

In addition to her legal work, Reilly is active in community work with Denver Kids, a Denver Public Schools-based mentoring program. Reilly has worked with the organization as a mentor and is now co-chairing the search committee for its next CEO. She said the opportunity to play an important role for an organization that means so much to her is one of the most rewarding experiences of her career.

Reilly is also involved with the Colorado Women's Bar Association and is on the board of the CWBA Foundation, through which she promotes the advancement of women in the legal profession in part by speaking about grit and growth mindset. Reilly said the topic can apply to anyone regardless of age, gender or career, but that it's specifically relevant to women in the law. Generally, women in the legal profession demonstrate grit but lawyers often have trouble with growth mindset, having the understanding that traits like intelligence and talent can be improved through practice.

“Realizing that it comes back to the same concept — needing to improve is actually empowering, exciting and motivating instead of demoralizing,” she said. “That makes this very difficult job a lot more enjoyable and rewarding.” •

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