

## Robinson & Cole Elects 1st Woman Managing Partner

By **Adrian Cruz**

*Law360 (February 19, 2021, 4:12 PM EST)* -- Robinson & Cole LLP said Friday it had elected a trial attorney with over 30 years of experience at the firm as its new managing partner, making her the first woman head in its 175-year history.

Rhonda J. Tobin will replace Stephen E. Goldman as managing partner at the start of March. Currently the co-chair of the firm's litigation section, Tobin has represented a number of insurance companies in high-value claims including multimillion-dollar property disputes following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and more recently, coverage issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Rhonda Tobin

"It's really meaningful for me," Tobin told Law360 Pulse. "This has been my home for the past 30 years and it's been an incredible journey, not only with the lawyers I work with but our fantastic professional staff. It's been a long and great road practicing law and I'm really excited to take on this new role, helping to lead the firm over the next few years."

Tobin said that a change in managing partners has been in the works for several years, with Goldman deciding he only wanted to be in the role for five years. During Goldman's time at Robinson & Cole, the firm embarked on a significant expansion push, opening offices in Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware, doubling the size of its New York office and expanding bankruptcy, insurance and real estate practices as part of a three-year strategic plan.

Upon stepping down, Goldman will remain at the firm, serving as the chair of its lateral growth committee and continuing work on his trial practice.

"I am extraordinarily pleased by the election of Rhonda Tobin. I have known and worked closely with Rhonda for over 30 years, and I can't think of anyone more qualified to be our next leader," Goldman said in a statement. "As I have said to our partners, there is no question that Rhonda is the right person at the right time, especially as we approach both the challenges and the opportunities that will be presented by what we hope will be the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic."

As part of the strategic plan, Tobin said Robinson & Cole plans on investing more in existing talent while at the same time continuing to grow externally, with a focus on the Northeast markets. She also said over the next year, the firm will be focusing on how operations will ultimately end up as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic, including technology, office space and attorney flexibility.

"We are 175 years old for a reason and I think that reason is that we've paid enormous attention to our culture even as we grow," Tobin said. "For me personally, in addition to focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion, I'm making sure we're doing that and keeping the rich history we have. A lot of our former partners have reached out to me, to say 'you have a precious firm in your hand, please take care of it.'"

A number of mid-sized firms have been electing women managing partners in recent months, including Barclay Damon LLP and Susman Godfrey LLP, both of which elected female heads for the first time in their history. Tobin said that while she's the first woman to lead Robinson & Cole, since she joined the firm, there have always been influential women to set an example.

"I really benefited when I joined the firm back in 1990 that there were strong female litigation partners already at the firm," she said. "When I arrived, it never occurred to me that gender would be an issue in my career since I had already seen women at the firm who had already achieved success. I hope that it will be helpful for not only our female lawyers but our other diverse lawyers to see that there's no limit to what they can achieve at the firm."

Tobin noted Robinson & Cole's "history of firsts" in regard to diverse leadership, specifically mentioning Connecticut federal judge and former partner Alvin Thompson, who became one of first African-Americans to be named managing partner at a large firm when he was elected in 1991.

Tobin's appointment as managing partner is the latest move by Robinson & Cole in 2021, with the firm adding four new attorneys in Philadelphia and Boston and an eight-person insurance team in New York last month.

According to the firm's website, Robinson & Cole currently has over 220 attorneys located in 11 offices across the country.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.

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