

## Rising Star: Susman Godfrey's Katy Peaslee

By **Grace Elletson**

*Law360 (July 26, 2023, 1:06 PM EDT)* -- Susman Godfrey LLP's Katy Peaslee was a leading attorney on the team that helped Dominion Voting Systems secure a \$787 million settlement in its defamation suit against the media giant Fox Corp., earning her a spot among the media and entertainment attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 Rising Stars.

### *Her biggest case:*

Peaslee said the Dominion victory serves as the most significant case she's worked on, not only due to the breadth of the discovery conducted in an extremely short amount of time — she said she helped organize dozens of depositions and collected countless documents — but also because the dispute took on the importance of truth.

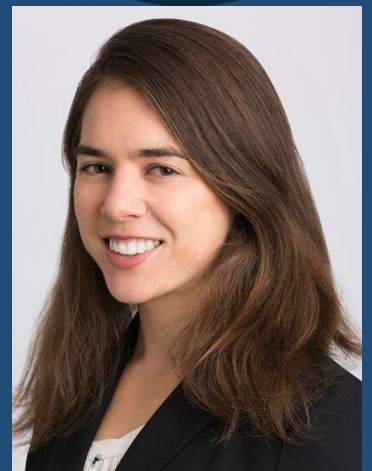
"The truth matters," Peaslee said. "There are ... certainly figures in the media who've gotten a lot of attention, whether they are organizations or individuals, for whom that seems to not be the case. And I think the message of this case was, 'No, it really does matter.'"

In April, Fox struck the \$787.5 million settlement just as a jury trial was set to begin to resolve Dominion's \$1.6 billion defamation suit claiming Fox News Network pushed a conspiracy theory that the company's voting machines flipped votes from then-President Donald Trump to current President Joe Biden in the 2020 election.

Attorneys and scholars have hailed the settlement as an exemplary defamation case for the way lawyers were able to uncover personal messages from Fox commentators demonstrating that they knew the information they were pushing to viewers was bogus.

"It's just very validating that you can take on a case where you are the underdog ... going up against a media behemoth with huge resources and a huge platform, and if you put in the work and the truth is on your side — it was nice to see that that can succeed," Peaslee said.

2023



**Katy Peaslee**  
Susman Godfrey

**Age:** 34

**Home base:** Seattle

**Position:** Associate

**Law school:** University of Chicago Law School

**First job after law school:**  
Clerked for U.S. District Judge Katherine Polk Failla of the Southern District of New York

### ***Her proudest moment:***

When reflecting on a moment that made her most proud, Peaslee went back to the beginning of her career.

She said it came during her first deposition that she took on her own. Peaslee was the most junior attorney in the room, she recalled, and she was probing a high-level executive who was being defended by the partner of the opposing law firm.

"I walked into the room and frankly felt very underqualified to be there," Peaslee said. "But, you know, I did my job. I got what we needed. I proved to myself and my team that it was not a mistake to let me handle this."

She said the experience fortified her confidence that she could rise to the challenges that she was being given, and it also encouraged her to seek out more opportunities that pushed the boundaries of her skill set.

### ***What motivates her:***

Motivation strikes Peaslee when she's able to take on new, sometimes daunting legal challenges that allow her to expand her experience, such as arguing a case in front of a federal appeals court as an associate against an opposing partner counsel.

"I walked into the room and I had to be one of the youngest people there by a bit," Peaslee said. "I was very happy with how that argument went. And we won."

### ***Why she's a media and entertainment attorney:***

While Peaslee noted that she would call herself more of a generalist litigator whose focus has been set as of late on the continuing Dominion disputes, she said she wanted to get involved in the courtroom because of her fascination with building cases from the ground up.

After clerking on the district court and appellate level, Peaslee said she enjoyed watching how different attorneys would approach building their arguments.

"The combination of writing and academic analytic work that needs to happen, along with the human element of working with witnesses, speaking to a jury, understanding what is going to resonate with people," Peaslee said, "that whole enterprise is very interesting."

### ***How she thinks the industry will change in 10 years:***

Peaslee said she has her eye on how artificial intelligence will transform media and entertainment copyright disputes, given the technology's generative abilities to create art by drawing on and learning from existing work.

"That raises all sorts of questions," Peaslee said. "What's the scope of copyright protection that is given to work that's created using AI but trained on copyrighted work? If you feed AI all of Taylor Swift's catalog and then get a new song, who has the rights to that?"

— *As told to Grace Elletson.*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2023 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of May 1, 2023, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*