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AMERICA'S TOP WOMEN LAWYERS

By Liane Jackson. Published June 3rd, 2026.

Most influential lawyers operate behind the headlines. When high-stakes legal work proceeds in courtrooms, boardrooms and conference rooms across the country, what matters most isn't name recognition, but the skill, dedication and judgment to deliver results.

The attorneys on Forbes' inaugural America's Top Women Lawyers list have built elite reputations in these very spaces, earning the trust of clients, the respect of peers and a place among the most accomplished in the profession. They guide billion-dollar deals, lead bet-the-company litigation, argue precedent-setting cases, navigate corporate crises, and influence the legal frameworks that define business, politics and culture.

To identify the top women practitioners in the nation, we reviewed thousands of nominees in a rigorous, multi-step evaluation process. Honorees were rated on factors including notable litigation, leadership, client impact, firm and community involvement, and recognition within the broader legal industry.

The resulting list spotlights leaders, rainmakers, trusted counselors and innovators, as well as mentors and changemakers blazing a trail for other women in the field. This roster of 200 represents high achievers who have reached the pinnacle of a demanding profession and who are reshaping the industry itself.



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHELLE ROHN FOR FORBES

KALPANA SRINIVASAN

Susman Godfrey | Co-Managing Partner

For the past three years, litigation powerhouse Susman Godfrey has generated its highest revenues ever by winning landmark cases in cutting-edge matters, catapulting the Texas-founded boutique into the ranks of the top-grossing firms in the country. Shepherding that success is Los Angeles-based Kalpana Srinivasan, Susman's first female managing partner and its first managing partner of color.

Srinivasan is also a first-chair trial attorney, litigating high-stakes technology, antitrust and intellectual property matters, including a recent nine-figure win in the retrial of a massive trade-secret case after eight years of litigation in San Antonio state court.

Her fast-track career and groundbreaking trajectory have been fueled by a series of formative experiences spanning journalism, law, and leadership. After reporting for the Associated Press, attending Stanford Law School, and clerking for Ninth Circuit Judge Raymond C. Fisher, Srinivasan started in Susman's newly formed, four-attorney Los Angeles office, which honed her advocacy and management acumen.

"I was learning both legal litigation skills but also learning about growing the business and building an institution," Srinivasan says. "It became a natural platform for having other roles at the firm."

Promoted to partner after just four years, Srinivasan served on major firm committees before becoming a managing partner in 2020. She says early and extensive trial practice, along with pay transparency and an all-equity partnership structure, made it easier to understand the path forward and the work needed to rise through the ranks.

"For me, having the opportunity to [litigate] early on in my career enabled me to look at other things I could do, but not have to do it at the expense of my practice," she says. "I could be out there pitching cases and looking for great matters and client opportunities while still also undertaking management of the firm."

Under her leadership, Susman has thrived with a full docket of high-profile matters in rapidly evolving areas, from AI to class actions. And despite its headcount – 250 attorneys across four offices – the firm has leveraged its talent to punch above its weight. Srinivasan says the firm does this by staying nimble, flexible and creative, using contingency fees on commercial litigation and engaging in growth that's organic and measured.

"We don't really look around in the marketplace and say, 'We need to do this or that,'" Srinivasan says. "We are willing to bet on ourselves and to structure our relationships to reflect the results we deliver and not just the time we put into things."

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