

Shannon Liss-Riordan

Partner, Lichten & Liss-Riordan | Harvard Law School

With a nickname like “Sledgehammer Shannon,” it’s clear that Shannon Liss-Riordan is not afraid to fight for her clients.

Working with Bella S. Abzug after college taught Liss-Riordan about the power lawyers could have in shaping society and advocating for what they believe in.

Knowing she wanted to focus on civil rights in the employment law arena, Liss-Riordan fell into wage and hour work. “It is a fascinating area of the law and a great place to be able to do some good in the world for working people,” she says.

Liss-Riordan’s clients have ranged from waiters and bartenders to exotic dancers to airline skycaps. A group of American Airlines skycaps came up with her nickname after she won a \$325,000 verdict on their behalf.

Recently, she has turned her attention to cleaning workers and cab drivers.

“I’ve really enjoyed representing a wide variety of working people, seeing how the law might be applied to them and helping even out the balance of power a bit between

workers and employers,” she says.

Liss-Riordan has also advocated for low-wage workers at the State House and was recently invited to join the board of Public Citizen, the consumer rights organization founded by Ralph Nader.

She expects to continue her focus on wage and hour cases, although she’s concerned about the potential for plaintiffs to be shut out of the courtroom because of class action waivers included in arbitration agreements used by employers.

“Courts are increasingly enforcing these agreements and it is changing how we practice law in this area,” she says. For example, instead of filing a class action, Liss-Riordan recently filed 100 individual arbitration disputes.

Despite the challenges, “I feel really fortunate to be able to pursue justice for workers and people who have not historically had the power in their relationships and create inroads in relatively new areas of the law,” she says. “I’m proud of the nickname because it means that I’m a strong advocate for my clients.”

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