

The Legal Balance: Resources for women attorneys and a safe haven to discuss diverse personal and professional concerns and perspectives

By Erica Zalokar

This spring, a new resource, The Legal

Balance, will be made available to women attorneys

here in Chicago. The Legal Balance is more than an online social network-ing community for women attorneys. The Legal Balance contains resourcesfor women attorneys to help them finda better work-life balance. The Legal Balance's mission is to help with the pro- motion, retention and advancement of women attorneys in the legal profession and beyond by creating a safe, nurturing and supportive community replete with

resources all in one spot.The community draws on the collec-

tive knowledge of its members to create a powerhouse "brain." No matter where one is at in their career, The Legal Balance will connect its members to a diverse group of women attorneys to discuss their issues and to answer each others' questions and concerns.

The Legal Balance will also provide tips on rainmaking, mentoring, career advancement, and job opportunities. The Legal Balance is designed to be a repository of any resource women attor-

ney need to manage their personal and professional obligations.

How Does The Legal Balance Help Women?

The Legal Balance will provide anonymous forums to facilitate community discussions by allowing its members to ask each other those tough and sometimes delicate questions. There are many online communities for women and professionals, but no community just

for women attorneys who many times



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In

my introduction to the paralegal class

that I teach, we go over the system of checks and

balances in

this country. The way the system is supposed to work is that if the U.S. Supreme Court interprets the statute and gets it wrong, then Congress has the option

to write legislation that, if signed by the president (assuming no veto), overrules those decisions. It doesn't happen very often and so when it does it is notable. The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 is such an instance. These amendments overrule several United States Supreme Court decisions that had narrowed considerably the scope of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The amendments also clarify the regulatory authority

for implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1998 as well as give

the regulators some guidance on what the subsequent regulations might look like. In particular, the following is worth noting:

1. The EEOC had defined whether a person was substantially limited in a major life activity as occurring when that person is significantly restricted in a major life activity when compared to the average person.¹ With the amendments, Congress has made it clear that this standard goes too far and that the regulatory bodies will have to adopt a far more inclusive standard.²

2. *Sutton*, *Albertson's*³ and *Toyota Motor*⁴ have been overruled. More specifically, mitigating measures—whether they be prosthetic devices, medicine the person takes, or something

that the body does—are not to be

factored into whether a person has

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have special personal and professional issues because of the unique nature of the practice of law. The Legal

Balance will facilitate this special sharing of information such as sharing recommendations for a fertility specialist, discussing how to negotiate a four-day work week, or how to find an advocate when close to partnership. The Legal Balance will promote solutions and sharing in a safe, positive and diverse community.

The Legal Balance also will have many contributors, including a group of successful and powerful women attorneys, such as its "Dear Jane" contributor where members can ask their questions anonymously to a well-respected Chicago community leader without feeling embarrassed. Many women want to know if

it is okay to date a co-worker, or should they be concerned if no one has asked them to take an expert deposition. The Legal Balance's "Dear Jane" will work with its members to create a success strategy career game plan and to share the information to its members.

The Legal Balance will provide an

events calendar to its members where the bar associations' events will be showcased and listed for quick review and to connect its members to the various bar association committees and resources focusing on career issues, women's issues, mentoring opportunities and other programs geared towards women attorneys.

The Legal Balance will provide access to the Top 100 Legal Balance Leaders in its section entitled, "This is how she does it!" where The Legal Balance will showcase successful women attorney leaders in Chicago, and later the nation.

Lastly, The Legal Balance has numerous experts on hand to answer questions on real estate, finance, career, skin care from an Oprah show dermatologist, and even a wine expert.

The Legal Balance is designed for all women attorneys from all diverse backgrounds. Whether one is a new lawyer freshly sworn into the bar, a veteran lawyer who's been practicing for years, an associate, in-house

council, government attorney, not-for-profit lawyer,
judge,

staff attorney, partner, law student, stay- at-home
mom, or an attorney looking to return to the practice,
The Legal Balance values the diverse community of women
attorneys and will bring the community together into
one safe place. _____

About the Founder: After practicing law for seven years,
Erica Zalokar was alarmed at the attrition rate of women
attorneys leaving the practice of law, and Erica realized a
new passion: helping women attorneys from all backgrounds
gain access to resources and to connect them in one
powerful community to allow them to use their great brains,
talents and resources to help others.

Prior to The Legal Balance, Erica practiced corporate
litigation at numerous prestigious law firms including
Eimer Stahl Klevorn & Solberg, a litigation boutique spun-
off from Sidley & Austin, Ungaretti & Harris, and Williams,
Montgomery & John. Erica is a 1998 graduate from Indiana
University Maurer School of Law.

The Legal Balance goes live this spring with a \$40 annual
membership fee to join. If you would like an invitation to
join, Erica can be reached at Erica@thelegalbalance.com.