

## Rising Star: Mintz's Laura Bange Stephens

By Daphne Zhang

*Law360 (July 14, 2020, 3:43 PM EDT)* -- Laura Bange Stephens of Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky and Popeo PC has been instrumental in securing major coverage and settlement decisions for Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., ranging from decades-old sexual abuse claims to bankruptcy issues, landing her among the insurance law practitioners under age 40 honored as Law360 Rising Stars.

### **THE BIGGEST CASE OF HER CAREER:**

Stephens played a lead role in representing Liberty Mutual Insurance Co. over 125 sexual abuse claims that were asserted against the Diocese of Duluth and over 70 parishes within that diocese. After a jury awarded a verdict of more than \$8 million on a single claim, the diocese filed for bankruptcy.

Stephens said that one of the most interesting aspects of the case was that the abuse allegations dated back to the 1960s, so the policies were very old and either incomplete or lost. Stephens' team dealt with the insured's burden of proof and the sufficiency of the evidence regarding lost or missing policies.

"Our team succeeded in removing the reference of the coverage action from a bankruptcy court to the federal district court, which is very rare. That was a success," she said. "After we fully briefed the coverage issues, our client basically amicably resolved the dispute that the parties reached a settlement, which includes a channeling injunction with respect to future claims."

### **WHY SHE CHOSE INSURANCE:**

Stephens began working on insurance coverage law as a first-year associate out of law school. She said she specifically likes working with insurance company clients.

"Insurance is in my DNA. My mother spent her entire career in insurance, and I began learning the ropes during my summers at college at the large insurance agency where she worked in New York.



**Laura Bange Stephens**  
Mintz Levin

Age: 37

Home base: Boston

Position: Special Counsel

Law school: Boston University  
School of Law

First job after law

school: Associate at Taylor  
Duane Barton &

Gilman (now Barton Gilman)

And then in law school, I sought out insurance law courses, and when I graduated, I began practicing insurance coverage really from day one. And I haven't stopped."

**WHAT MOTIVATES HER:**

Stephens is motivated by working with underwriters, brokers, claims professionals and executives who are knowledgeable and always "incredibly" driven. She also finds it most rewarding to foster strong relationships with clients.

"I want them to rely on me for strategic advice. I get the most positive reinforcement when a client looks to me for legal advice and I'm able to fit that advice to a larger strategic picture."

Stephens said she also draws inspiration from her colleagues at Mintz. "They are not only terrific lawyers, but they're incredibly kind and compassionate people. I've also had the good fortune of having mentors, many of them highly accomplished women at my firm who have really helped me grow into the professional that I am today," she said.

**WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR HER PRACTICE:**

She believes there will be lasting changes to the insurance industry both in the insurance products and the legal landscape stemming from COVID-19. The pandemic is going to raise a lot of issues that will need to be dealt with at the underwriting level and are also going to lead to changes in policy language, she said. Stephens also expects to see changes in worker's compensation insurance coverage as remote work environments have become more common.

The beauty of insurance is that it's constantly evolving to meet an ever-changing set of global risks, she said. "Policies change and develop over time. And also new insurance products are introduced in the market. So as a result, the legal landscape relating to insurance coverage is constantly in flux. I look forward to tackling the sort of novel legal questions that future policies hold."

— *As told to Daphne Zhang*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2020 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2020, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*