

## Shumaker Unveils Fresh Diversity Push With New Committee

By **Emily Sawicki**

Law360 (April 10, 2023, 4:00 PM EDT) -- Shumaker Loop & Kendrick LLP is revamping its decades-old diversity and inclusion program with the announcement of six diversity & inclusion partners who will spearhead a new push toward greater inclusion for the Toledo, Ohio-based firm.

Partners Laura Johnson Evans, Christina Davidson Trimmer, David F. Axelrod, Ashley S. Hodson, Julio C. Esquivel and Katherine S. Decker round out the D&I partner class, which also includes Sharon Fulop, a partner and management committee member who serves as a liaison between the committee and the management team. The partners represent a variety of sectors and practices.

"This is a group that's going to roll up their sleeves," Fulop said in an interview with Law360 Pulse on Monday.

"It's a bright group. They all have great practices," Fulop added. "But they believe that we can do more, and this is the group that's going to, like I said, maybe take us to the next level. We don't want to pay lip service to equity and inclusion. We don't want to quell uncomfortable conversations. We want to educate in a respectful way."

In her 25 years at Shumaker, Fulop said she has seen the firm make strides toward greater diversity, but attrition remains a stumbling block.

"You get great people in the door, and then they leave, and that's what we're trying to stop," Fulop said. That makes up the first of many goals the group has in mind as it comes together.

Others include increasing opportunities for education and dialogue, growing the diversity of leadership positions within the firm, mentorship and economic equity, meaning ensuring the fair allocation of profits among employees, Fulop said.

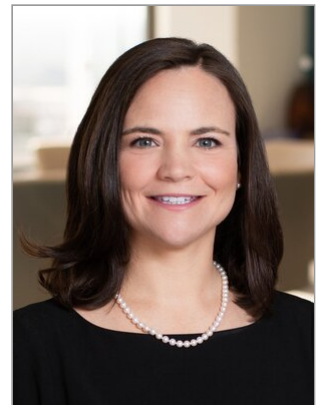
The new D&I partner group is so new that it has not yet set out to define quantifiable goals and determine strategy, Fulop said. In fact, when the group meets for the first time this week, it will first need to select a name.

"Part of what we will do together is figure out what our firm needs — a firm of our size, with our different offices, in different locations, different regions," Fulop said. "What do we need to accomplish what we want to accomplish with this group — this structure? Do we need to bring somebody in just as a consultant? Do we need to hire somebody as a full time D&I professional?"

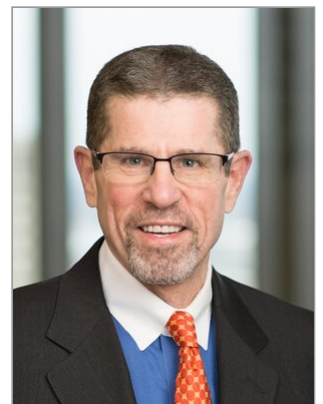
Shumaker is a full-service firm that employs about 250 attorneys, with offices in South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio and Florida.



Laura Johnson Evans



Christina Davidson Trimmer



David F. Axelrod

Shumaker's management committee and managers of the firm's seven offices selected the members of the firm's new D&I partner group, which includes four women, one Latino man and one older Jewish man, Fulop said, adding that each of these partners comes from an underrepresented group within the legal profession.

"Our expectation is that the pipeline of diverse candidates for any leadership position will continue to grow," Fulop said when asked about the future diversity of the D&I partner group. "We also were mindful of trying not to just say, 'Hey, you are this color,' or, 'You're LGBTQ, help us solve this problem.'"

All of the partners named to the group have already shown enthusiasm for their mission of increasing D&I at Shumaker, according to Fulop.

"The job of this group is to move that needle one notch at a time, grabbing more and more allies and people that want to be a part of the process of making this firm as diverse as it can be, so that we can represent our clients in the best way possible," Fulop said.

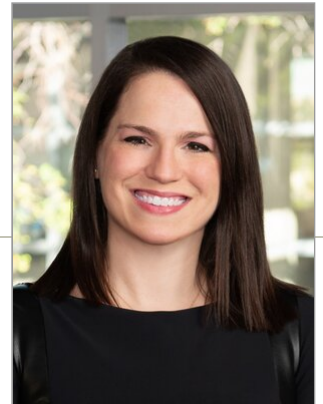
--Editing by Alex Hubbard.

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Ashley S. Hodson



Katherine S. Decker



Julio C. Esquivel