

## LEADERSHIP

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### Ballard Spahr LLP: Driving Diversity from the Top



**MARK STEWART**  
Chair  
Ballard Spahr

**Mark Stewart is the new** Chair of Ballard Spahr LLP, a national law firm with over 500 lawyers and 13 offices throughout the United States. Stewart started with the firm as a summer associate 30 years ago and now sits at its helm. "We are a firm that puts excellent service above everything else and we like working together," says Stewart. "What I especially like about being Chair, is the license to visit our offices and partners to get to know them and what they are trying to do for our clients."

Stewart decided to become a lawyer in high school. "In my high school yearbook I wrote, 'I want to go into law', but I don't remember doing that," chuckles Stewart. "There was no plan. Looking back, I more or less stumbled onto things."

If Stewart stumbled into his profession, one should "stumble" as beautifully as he did. He attended London School of Economics from 1976 to 1977. He then went on to attend The University of Delaware, where he received his BA and graduated with honors in 1978. He got his JD from The University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1982, clerked for a Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, and then joined Ballard Spahr in 1983.

Prior to assuming his new position, Stewart successfully litigated complex commercial matters, including securities, antitrust, contract disputes, and product liability matters, on behalf of major pharmaceutical and other corporate clients. He also served as Ballard Spahr's Strategic Planning Partner, overseeing the opening of six offices and the recruitment of talented laterals firm-wide. Earlier, he co-chaired the Diversity Committee and was instrumental in implementing programs for minorities and women throughout the firm.

"The Committee started due to the fact that we realized that we had extremely valuable women and minorities who were becoming increasingly important to the future of the firm and we were hearing from our clients that they were expecting our firm to be more diverse when it came to practicing law," says Stewart. "I think we thought we were doing a good job, but we understood that you can always do a better job. So we tested that proposition and now we try to make sure that we do all the things we can to make Ballard a welcoming place for all people."

As Chair, he has promoted women to key positions, including the promotion of Virginia Essandoh to Chief Diversity Officer. "I made her part of the Management Committee. That way, she will have immediate access to the members of the management team. This will give her more exposure and she will hear what is going on in other departments and they will hear ideas from her. She is a great asset to our team and I believe the firm will benefit tremendously from her input."

Ballard Spahr's elected Board is composed of 20% women. Three of the firm's offices are managed by minorities, two of them women. Fourteen of the firm's practice areas are led by women. A quarter of Ballard's partners are women, compared to the national average of 19 percent.

"The goal here is to continue to have the right lawyers and provide the legal services that clients want. We have to have women and minority lawyers in positions of authority so they can close the deals and interact with the clients. Ultimately, we want this place to be one where clients come to get great legal services and where lawyers come to have fulfilling careers." ■