

Rising Star: Mayer Brown's Katy McNeil

By Rose Krebs

Law360 (July 26, 2023, 1:04 PM EDT) -- Mayer Brown LLP's Katy C. McNeil has represented clients in financing major renewable energy projects, including Credit Suisse's \$300 million financing for community, commercial and industrial solar projects across the U.S., earning her a spot among the project finance law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 Rising Stars.

An interesting case she recently worked on:

McNeil was lead transaction counsel for Credit Suisse in its financing of a \$300 million debt facility for Distributed Solar Development. In January 2021, DSD announced that it had closed on the debt facility to fund "a broad range of commercial solar, industrial renewable energy projects."

Work related to the revolving credit facility was "complex given the number of types of solar projects involved and the need to accommodate multiple tax equity structures," McNeil told Law360.

Also, McNeil said, the work "allowed me to become deeply familiar with the community solar assets and the tax equity financing arrangements in place across many of DSD's portfolios, which, when combined with Mayer Brown's securitization knowledge and expertise, led to DSD's highly successful first issuance of asset-backed securities in 2022."

In December, DSD announced it had "raised \$155 million in debt financing for the first commercial and industrial solar asset-backed securitization with a significant concentration of community solar assets" in a transaction structured and underwritten by Credit Suisse Securities (USA) LLC.

"This issuance, which was a bellwether transaction for financing community solar assets, introduced the unique benefits and risks of these assets to investors in the structured finance market, opening up a new way to monetize this asset class for renewable energy developers across the country," McNeil said.

Her proudest moment:

"I know a lot of people talk about transactions," McNeil told Law360. "I'm

2023

 **LAW360**[®]
**RISING
STAR**



Katy McNeil
Mayer Brown

Age: 35

Home base: Chicago

Position: Partner

Law school: University of Michigan Law School

First job after law school: Associate at Mayer Brown

going to go a bit of a different route."

McNeil highlighted her work with the University of Michigan Law School's Innocence Clinic in helping exonerate and secure the eventual release of Jeff Titus. Titus was released from prison earlier this year, after having been convicted in 2002 and sentenced to life in prison for the murders of two hunters, the clinic's website says.

The clinic lobbied the state attorney general's office to consider new evidence, and Titus was released when the office stipulated "to unconditional habeas relief on the grounds that evidence favorable to Titus' defense had been withheld from his legal team," the law school's website said.

"That's my proudest moment," McNeil said. "There is nothing better, that makes you feel more fulfilled, than helping someone get a part of their life back."

McNeil said it was "a moment of true pride" to have been part of the team that helped exonerate Titus. Charges against Titus were dropped on June 1, according to The Associated Press.

She said she still does pro bono work on wrongful conviction cases, including volunteering with Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law's Center on Wrongful Convictions.

What motivates her:

"I'm very motivated by the challenge of something new and something novel that hasn't been hammered out into exact parameters before," McNeil said of the type of work she finds fulfilling.

She enjoys helping clients navigate issues, which can sometimes be difficult and involve having to come up with solutions that combine "different financing structures," she said.

"What keeps me motivated is not just doing the same thing over and over again," McNeil said, adding that she certainly doesn't have "a cookie-cutter career."

Why she's a project finance attorney:

McNeil said she "was very drawn in law school" to working on cases involving climate change issues.

"Climate change is something I'm very personally passionate about," McNeil said. "I'm passionate about causes that are important to me personally."

In her daily work, McNeil said she often gets to work with clients that are engaged in projects aimed at trying to address climate issues. Working at a large firm on complex deals to help make a difference for those clients is rewarding, she said.

McNeil said she considers herself "a renewable energy lawyer," as she often works on financing for such projects.

On the future of her practice area:

Since many of her clients are in the renewable energy space, they often have goals that are aligned with hers, including figuring out forward-thinking ways to create a better world through infrastructure and other projects, McNeil told Law360.

"The practice will continue to be on the cutting edge of [using] technology to combat climate change," she said.

And legislation will continue to play a big part in impacting what steps can be taken in the real world, McNeil said. It's the job of her and other lawyers to ensure clients are informed about the latest legislation, so they can take advantage of opportunities to pursue projects that may help address climate change issues, she said.

"We have to be there to make sure [clients] understand regulatory issues," McNeil said, so they can most effectively move forward with financing to bring projects to fruition.

— *As told to Rose Krebs.*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2023 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of May 1, 2023, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.

All Content © 2003-2023, Portfolio Media, Inc.