

## Robinson & Cole Atty On Taking The Reins Of Mass. RE Group

By **Emma Cueto**

*Law360 (November 23, 2021, 10:32 AM EST)* -- In a few weeks, Robinson & Cole LLP partner Kendra L. Berardi will begin her term as president of the Real Estate Bar Association of Massachusetts.

Berardi, whose practice focuses on real estate litigation, will take over as the new head of the association on Jan. 1.

Berardi said she is proud of the way that REBA — a 150-year-old organization — has pivoted in response to the pandemic, adding that she thinks the organization is still an important part of the real estate law community in the state.

Berardi recently spoke with Law360 Pulse about her plans for her one-year term, the status of the real estate industry in Boston, and the future of virtual court proceedings. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Kendra L. Berardi

### How did you originally get involved in REBA?

I was introduced to REBA when I first graduated from law school in 2008. I began my legal career clerking for a judge who was at the time the chief justice of the land court in Massachusetts — Judge Karyn Scheier. She was and is now an extraordinary mentor, and one of her first pieces of advice was "If this is the kind of work you want to do, if you want to be in the real estate space, then this is an organization you need to join and get involved with."

So when I was clerking, I was a member of REBA, and I used that to network with other members of the bar to learn a little bit about what the profession — and the community I hoped to join when I left my clerkship — looked like.

I left my clerkship in 2011 and became a more active member, and in 2013 REBA decided to create a new lawyers section. They had tried to create one before and hadn't had much success, but they were trying again. And they reached out to me. So in 2014 I became the chair of the new lawyers committee and joined the board. And from there I joined the executive committee and then became an officer.

It's been a journey and a great one.

## **Now that you're going to be the president, what would you like to focus on during your term?**

I think there are two things REBA is doing that I'd like to build on. The first is outreach to both young lawyers and law students. I was not involved in REBA as a law student, but as a brand-new lawyer, the value of a REBA membership was incalculable. Now, as a partner here at Robinson & Cole, I have cases against lawyers I can say I have known for over a decade because I knew them by virtue of my membership and involvement with REBA — and those relationships that I created early in my career benefit me now, and also benefit my clients, because I have relationships across the table.

So I think outreach to young lawyers in particular — and also law students who have expressed interest in the multi-layered facets of real estate law in the commonwealth. It's crucial to REBA as the lifeblood of the association, but I also think it's crucial to young members of the bar.

And I want to continue that outreach, because the last two years — in I think every organization — were a challenge. A lot of the initiatives that we as an organization wanted to implement were paused for reasons outside our control. And I think we're at a time when we can reinvigorate them and go back to what we wanted to be doing pre-pandemic.

The other initiative, which goes hand in hand with that, is REBA's peer-to-peer mentoring program. It's something our members utilize frequently, something I found incredibly helpful, both as a law clerk and early in my career. And by virtue of the fact that we've all been enclosed in our own spaces for going on two years now, there's a number of members of the bar who have entered this profession in a strange way. Many young lawyers have started their career in this industry working in their own home, haven't interacted with other members of the bar, haven't interacted with people in our industry, or even their own colleagues in a meaningful way since early 2020.

So I think there's a need for peer-to-peer mentoring to fill that gap. I think there's an appetite among young lawyers who spent the last two years without an outlet for mentoring and networking to make up for lost time. And REBA can fill that gap in a real way, because we're able, through this peer-to-peer mentoring program, to connect people.

But I'm also conscious of the fact that many of the issues that might require REBA's attention in the next year haven't revealed themselves yet. The legal industry has seen an extraordinary amount of change over the past two years, and it will continue to do so.

## **What trends or developments are you seeing in the real estate law world right now?**

The real estate market in general the last year has been extraordinarily busy from a buying and selling perspective. The amount of work that lawyers in the transactional world were doing was unprecedented in some ways. People were taking advantage of very low interest rates; there was a lot of activity. And in talking with my colleagues both in my firm and contacts outside the firm, some were at the point of turning work away, they had so much to do.

That continues to be an opportunity. I think it has maybe slowed down a little to an acceptable level, but it hasn't gone away. And in Boston, transactional work often goes hand in hand with a lot of development.

You look out over the landscape of Boston; there's a lot of change happening. There's a lot of development; there's a lot of building; there's a lot of changing. And a lot of things flow from that.

As a member of the community of Boston, the change is exciting. It's exciting to live in a vibrant city that's always undergoing some sort of transformation. And as a real estate lawyer, it's interesting to see how those changes might spin out and what will come from them.

**You are also co-chair of the women's committee at Robinson & Cole. What is your impression of the impact of the last year on women in the legal world?**

I feel a bit like a broken record, but it's been a strange couple of years. We've had to pivot to interacting with our colleagues in a fully remote way. But much of what we at the committee have done over the past two years is to listen. We do a lot of listening, talking to our women lawyers and asking, "What would be most helpful? What kind of programming or panels or conversations can we be facilitating for our women lawyers that will help in some ways?"

And some of it can be very small. For instance when you're in the office, people tend to default to a lunch meeting, because that's the easiest time to schedule a speaker or a panel, because everybody takes lunch. But one thing we were hearing is that when we were remote, lunchtime was incredibly difficult. It didn't look the same.

People who had children at home or pets or family members they are caring for or even just errands they needed to run because it wasn't going to get done at the end of the day — lunch meetings became onerous.

So one of these small questions became about: How do we best consider the circumstance people are facing right now in their day-to-day life and work our programming around it?

I am looking forward to our next year because I think we'll be able to have some in-person programming again, and I think people are excited about that. But one thing I have in mind — and I know the firm does, too — is we also have to look back on the last couple of years and take those lessons with us.

And in terms of what the last year has looked like for women lawyers, I don't think there's one answer to that question. A lot of the challenges of the pandemic are gender-neutral — and some of them aren't.

There are a lot of statistics on the effect of the pandemic on women professionals in general. And I hope that is something that people are paying attention to.

**What do you expect 2022 to look like? Are there any predictions you have for what we might see next year?**

To the extent that I am not, at this point, completely terrified of predicting anything: I expect that remote court proceedings are here to stay in some fashion or another.

We've spent two years mostly doing everything remotely. Over the course of the pandemic, I tried three cases that were completely virtual. They were bench trials, but I had three trials that were fully remote and handled completely over Zoom. And I have colleagues and professional contacts who have done the same thing.

I think at the beginning of the pandemic, everybody expected that it would end, and we would go back to the way things were. And now after having spent two years doing this virtual platform and learning

how much of what we do can be done by sitting in your office and logging on, I don't think that's ever going away.

It probably won't be virtual trials all the time — and I know there are judges who hope never again — but think the future of litigation contains a virtual component.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.

---

All Content © 2003-2021, Portfolio Media, Inc.