

WILS Past, Present, and Future, Part II: A Conversation With Incoming Chair Kim Wolf Price

By Terri A. Mazur

Kim Wolf Price is the new chair of NYSBA's Women in Law Section. She started her term as WILS chair on June 1, 2023. She has been an active member of NYSBA since 2003 and a member of WILS and its predecessor CWIL since 2014. She also is a member of NYSBA's Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and is the former chair of NYSBA's Lawyers in Transition Committee. Kim is the chief strategy & diversity officer of Bond Schoeneck & King, PLLC, working with firm management and administration in implementing its strategic initiatives. She focuses on areas such as strategic planning, attorney professional development, diversity and inclusion, innovation and growth, firm culture development, and strategic talent acquisition.



Kim Wolf Price

Q: We know you are a lawyer and a WILS leader, but tell us a bit about yourself outside of the law.

A: Outside of the law, I am married and have two sons. We live outside of Syracuse, New York. Therefore, I have the honor of being WILS's first "upstate" chair. My husband Fred and I – who met in law school and now work together at Bond, Schoeneck & King – just celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary. Our oldest son began college in the fall and our youngest son will start high school. Our dog, Perry, completes the all-male home in which I live!

Beyond my work in the law, I find myself drawn to issues surrounding inclusion and well-being (which I also focus on within the legal profession). As I think about it, it is quite difficult to separate the law from much of what I do.

Q: What led you to join WILS? How long have you been a member of NYSBA?

A: I'll take the second question first. I have been a member of NYSBA since my third year of law school. A decision that has profoundly impacted my career in an incredibly positive way.

As for WILS, I was appointed to the Committee on Women in the Law a few years before CWIL became a section of the NYSBA. I had been active with the Committee on Lawyers in Transition for several years and was in line to become chair. I saw the great work CWIL was doing – and I'll admit, it was the annual Women on the Move program that really inspired me to become more active. I spoke with David Miranda, then president-elect, now general counsel of NYSBA, and let him know I was interested in becoming more

involved. He then appointed me to CWIL at the start of his term. I started working with the wonderful Linda Redlisky and Debra Hamilton, current members of the WILS Executive Committee, who were chairing the program. The warmth and collegiality of the group were amazing from the start. That was topped off by truly meaningful programming and policy work. I have been all in ever since and was proud to work with the committee as it became a section of NYSBA.

Q: What inspires you about WILS?

A: The WILS Executive Committee members inspire me. This is a talented, brilliant group of attorneys who lead with both passion and compassion.

We all have the privilege of these juris doctor degrees and law licenses. Yes, we earned them. But this is a group of attorneys who consciously and proactively believe that with this law degree comes responsibility. I can say that to a person, the members of WILS whom I have had the honor to work with want to leave this profession and the law more inclusive and fairer than it was when we first entered law school.

Q: Why is WILS so important for NYSBA and the legal community at large?

A: Within NYSBA, WILS serves as a voice for women attorneys as well as women throughout New York State. It would be wonderful if we could say "equality has been reached" and that issues pertaining to women and childbearing persons were resolved. We know that isn't the case. And it becomes even less true for women with intersectional identities, such as women of color, women from the LGBTQIA+ communities, and women with disabilities.

A significant majority of the sections and committees of NYSBA focus on areas of practice, which is fantastic. As lawyers, we need those sections to collaborate and teach each other about new developments in law and practice. WILS has the added responsibility of reviewing changes in law, policy, and practice to see how they particularly impact women attorneys and the women of New York State. WILS has done this in areas from family law matters to equal pay. In the area of health care and body autonomy for women and childbearing persons, WILS has been a critical voice within the bar which resulted in important legislative priorities on these issues (please see Resolution and Report of the New York State Bar Association Women in Law Section¹).

Q: Has the section somehow enhanced your practice/career/enthusiasm for the law? If so, how?

A: I won't lie, the divisiveness on issues, particularly at the national level, over the last few years is disheartening at best. In New York, when we are sworn in as attorneys, we promise to uphold the constitution of the State of New York and of the United States. It is humbling. The text of the oath is set forth in the New York State constitution:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the constitution of the United States, and the constitution of the State of New York, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of [attorney and counselor-at-law], according to the best of my ability.²

As I was thinking about how I would describe that, I found the following from the Appellate Division, Second Department, which says it so well:

The deceptively simple 47 words of the attorney's oath contain a pledge of such gravity and importance that the Legislature has seen fit to require that it be administered orally in a public court proceeding and to provide that the taking of the oath and the assumption of its obligations be evidenced by the newly admitted attorney's signature in a book specially kept for that purpose. The administration of the oath takes less than one minute, but its obligations endure for the life of the attorney's career at the bar.³

What does this have to do with how the Women in Law Section has "enhanced your practice/career/enthusiasm for the law"? In short, everything. From six-hour-plus phone calls discussing our response strategy after the *Dobbs* decision to programming and Zoom social events during the height of the pandemic, WILS has helped me stay engaged in the law. WILS has helped me stay hopeful for the future. WILS has helped me remember that oath and that the law is powerful. I have learned from excellent leaders such as Susan Harper, Terri Mazur, and Sheryl Galler. I am inspired by the time, thought, and creativity colleagues such as Laura Sulem and Frettra de Silva put into programming. And I am hopeful for new leaders such as Erica Youngerman who will continue to shape this section. There are too many wonderful attorneys to mention. It is their drive, their tenacity, their compassion, and their intelligence that continue to help fuel my enthusiasm for the law and this profession.

Q: What current issues pertaining to women in the law are you following or most concerned about?

A: I strive to make our profession more equitable. To break down barriers to practice. To make sure that children from all

communities learn about legal professions and are given the opportunity to pursue the same. Issues of equality and human rights, such as body autonomy, remain at the forefront of my thinking. I am concerned about the erosion of individual rights. Equity is different from equality. Equity involves acknowledging inequality and working to level the playing field.

Q: As you take on the role of section chair, what in your view are the section's priorities for the upcoming year?

A: The New York Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed its second legislative session in January of this year. That means it will be brought to a vote by the people in a ballot referendum in November 2024. Thanks to the work of WILS, the New York ERA is a legislative priority for NYSBA. It will be no surprise then that this is a significant priority for my year as Section Chair. Educating voters on this vote is critical. Many in New York State believe we already have an equal rights amendment. WILS has a Legislative Affairs Committee with a long history of success, which is now chaired by the talented Kaelyn Gustafson and Robin Kramer. Chair-Elect Frettra de Silva and I will work with that committee and many others on programming and educational opportunities.

Additionally, a focus on individual success plays a role in the year ahead. Our 2023 Women on the Move program was titled "Navigating the Path to Your Success." The half-day webinar was held on October 18, 2023 from 1:00 – 5:00 pm. This program and others, from cyber security careers to international collaborations, book clubs, and beyond focus on empowering women to define success on their own terms.

I do need to say here that behind all of this WILS programming and activity is our amazing NYSBA liaison, Ernesto Guerrero. He is a critical member of our team. We are very grateful for the work he and the entire professional staff at NYSBA do every day.

Q: What would you say to an attorney who is on the fence about joining the section?

A: This one is simple. I'd say, "what are you waiting for?" Join. Attend programming. Get to know the amazing attorneys involved and then, of course, reach out to me or another member of the EC and get involved. You will gain so much.

Endnotes

1. Supporting Abortion Rights and the New York State Equal Rights Amendment. November 2022, https://nysba.org/app/uploads/2023/02/Resolution-and-reports-of-the-Women-in-Law-Section_RC_PRINT_White-Border-WIL.pdf).
2. § 1 of Article XIII of the New York State Constitution.
3. <https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/ad2/forms/law%20guardian%20handbook/orientationtotheprofessionprogrammaterials.pdf>.