SFNet IMPACT Awards

2024 Volunteers of the Year: Advocacy

Laura Jakubowski is director of Knowledge Management and Innovation with Goldberg Kohn. She leads the firm's knowledge and data management strategy, and provides legal, technical, market and practical expertise for the firm's Commercial Finance and Bankruptcy practices. Laura is the 2025 chair of the SFNet Advocacy Committee and serves on the Executive Committee.

Laura rejoined Goldberg Kohn in her current position in August 2021. Prior to that, she was an Assistant General Counsel at a large financial institution where she focused on middle-market lending and digital, data use and privacy law matters for its commercial banking group. Previously she was a Commercial Finance Associate at Goldberg Kohn.

LAURA JAKUBOWSKI
Goldberg Kohn

Please tell us about your career trajectory.

I began my career as a commercial finance attorney at truly the best and worst of times, in the summer of 2007. The financial crisis that exploded shortly after that in 2008 was a frightening time for just about everyone in the world, and in particular for junior folks in finance who were learning a new subject matter and forging their career paths at a time when it felt like the world would never be the same. At the same time, helping to navigate financial institution clients through the tumult turned out to be the most effective way to learn about what is really important in lending transactions, and to really appreciate the key role that the loan markets play in the global economy. The experience made me who I am as a lawyer and shaped the rest of my career.

How did you get involved with the SFNet Advocacy Committee?

My involvement with the Advocacy Committee began with volunteering for a project to prepare a comment letter on the proposed U.S. regulations to implement the Basel III international banking regulatory framework. As noted, my career as a finance lawyer was shaped during the global financial crisis of 2007-2009. I subsequently spent a number of years in the internal legal department of a bank, and these two experiences gave me both an appreciation for the importance of prudent regulations, but also the need for those regulations to be sensible, purposeful, and to give financial institutions flexibility in their much-needed role of providing credit to drive business and the U.S. economy. Working on the Basel III comments gave me an opportunity to listen to concerns from financial institutions, as well as convey those concerns to regulatory agencies and have a dialogue with the agencies to get a better understanding of the intention behind the regulations - and to bridge the gap between them.

You are taking on the role of chair of SFNet's Advocacy Committee for the fiscal year 2025. What advice would you offer to SFNet members about why they should become more engaged in advocacy?

While organizing information for the Basel III comment process, it became clear to me that, especially with a somewhat niche product like ABL lending, there is a great deal of misinformation about how the product works, how important it is, and how safe it is. Lawmakers and regulatory agency staff by necessity must have broad knowledge and often lack deep expertise on nuanced products or topics. When it comes to asset-based lending, we, as SFNet members, are the experts, and it is important for us to share that expertise in order to help develop sensible regulations that are suited for the purposes our country, states and communities are trying to accomplish. It is also important to keep in mind that, outside of headline-grabbing federal regulations, states are often implementing new laws and regulations that have a broad reach in financial markets – and we need interested folks to dig into state-level activity as well. There are many ways to get involved, and it is so important that we collaborate and share our collective expertise and insights on asset-based lending.