



Milestones in working women's legal history

by BRAD HERSHBEIN



Deloitte built a business case for improving its work environment

Three factors helped us to make such radical changes. First, our senior leadership, in the early 1990s and today, has been visibly committed to making this happen. In 1993, with the launch of our Women's Initiative, our CEO attended all the Women's Initiative meetings, held a press conference to announce its kickoff, and kept everyone talking about how we could improve the environment for women. Second, we had a strong business case. Turnover was costing us millions of dollars each year; we needed to stop the bleeding and find ways to retain our people. And third, we held ourselves accountable. As accountants, we love numbers. So we track the pipeline, promotions, gender gap in turnover, flexible work arrangements—all the elements that keep the door open for women. And we rely on the outside advisory council to keep our feet to the fire.

In the last decade, the environment at Deloitte has become much more favorable for women—and for that matter, for men. For the last eight years, we have had the highest percentage of women partners, principals, and firm directors among the major accounting and professional services firms. Our gender turnover gap is almost completely gone. We now routinely appear on *Working Mother's* and *Fortune's* lists of the best companies to work for, and we have also been able to attract more clients because we have more staff stability on assignments. We still face many challenges ahead in maintaining an environment where women and men have equal opportunities for promotion and leadership at Deloitte. But we know that because of the strength of our Women's Initiative, we will continue to progress. *

V. Sue Molina is a retired partner and former National Director of the Initiative for the Retention and Advancement of Women at Deloitte & Touche USA LLP.

1920 Women receive the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment

1923 Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) first proposed by the National Women's Party

1932 The National Recovery Act allows only one person per family to hold a government job; many women are fired

1948 In *Goesaert v. Cleary*, the Supreme Court upholds a Michigan law that prohibits women from working in certain occupations (such as bartenders) on account of protecting morals

1963 Congress passes the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, barring wage discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, and ethnicity

1964 Congress passes the Civil Rights Act, Title VII of which forbids discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, and sex

1967 President Johnson's Executive Order 11375 requires federal agencies and contractors to actively ensure that women are not discriminated against in education or employment

1968 The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) rules sex-segregated help-wanted ads are illegal unless a *bona fide* reason exists for them

1969 California passes the nation's first no-fault divorce law

1969 In *Bowe v. Colgate-Palmolive*, the Supreme Court rules that women meeting the physical requirements can work in previously male-only jobs

1972 Title IX of the Education Act mandates that all educational programs receiving federal aid cannot discriminate on the basis of sex

1972 In *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, the Supreme Court rules that unmarried people have a right to use contraceptives, a right that married people received in *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965

1972 Congress strengthens the Equal Pay Act to apply to executives and professionals and empowers the EEOC to enforce its rulings through legal action

1973 In *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court effectively legalizes abortion nationwide

1974 In *Cleveland Board of Education v. LaFleur*, the Supreme Court rules it is unconstitutional to require women to take maternity leave on the assumption they are physically incapable of working

1977 Indiana becomes the 35th and last state to ratify the ERA, 3 states shy of the 38 needed

1986 In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, the Supreme Court finds that a hostile or abusive workplace can constitute sex discrimination

1993 Congress passes the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), requiring large employers to provide their employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for pregnancy or family illness

1997 The Home Depot settles a sex discrimination suit with over 7,000 of its female employees for more than \$65 million

1998 The Supreme Court finds that employers can be held responsible for sexual harassment of employees by supervisors, regardless of whether management specifically knew of the misconduct

2003 In *Nevada Department of Human Resources v. Hibbs*, the Supreme Court rules that the FMLA applies to state government employees as well as federal and private-sector workers

2004 After briefly going to court, Morgan Stanley settles for \$54 million a suit brought by the EEOC on behalf of 340 of the company's female managers and executives. Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, and Smith Barney (Citigroup) have together paid out more than \$150 million in settlements so far