

Spotlight — Member Firm: Nukk-Freeman & Cerra, P.C.

By Laura Gibson — [Ogden, Gibson, Brooks, Longoria & Hall, L.L.P.](#)

Suzanne Cerra and Katherin Nukk-Freeman

became friends while at Boston College of Law where they both received their JD's in 1993. Following graduation, Suzanne practiced law in New Jersey and



Katherin ventured to Sacramento, California to begin her legal career. Katherin returned to New Jersey in 1996 where she worked as an associate and ultimately made partner in 2000 in one of New Jersey's premier firms where she continued to work until 2006. Suzanne worked as an associate and made partner at the firm which is now known as Ogletree Deakins before opening her own firm in October of 1993.

In January 1996, Suzanne and Katherin kicked the year off to an excellent start by opening their own firm, Nukk-Freeman & Cerra, P.C. Since then, they have grown their all women firm to 18 lawyers and are known for their stellar employment practice. When the firm began, Suzanne's children were 6, 4 and 5 months old. Katherin's children were 4 and 2. The firm's 18 attorneys are mothers to 36 children. Despite their family obligations, the lawyers at NFC are known for their excellent services and top notch talent. All of the firm's partners work full time with 60% of the non-partners working full time and 40% working on a flex time arrangement. The NFC business model is clearly working with the firm's clients receiving excellent services and the firm's lawyers able not only to be excellent contributors to the firm and its clients but also exceptional parents, family members and leaders in the community.

When was the firm founded? The firm was founded in January 2006.

Who are the founding shareholders? The founding shareholders are Suzanna M. Cerra and Katherin Nukk-Freeman.

And how big is the firm – office location, partners and attorneys? The firm consists of 5 principals, 2 senior counsel, 4 counsel and 7 associates for a total of 18 attorneys and 4 professional non-lawyer staff. All of the firm's employees are women. The firm's office is in Short Hills, New Jersey.

What are the firm's significant areas of practice? The firm concentrates its practice on all areas of employer-employee relations. The firm does training sessions and conducts audits of clients designed to prevent litigation from occurring. Approximately 75% of the firm's business is handling defense of employment matters. The firm also provides advice regarding executive compensation, employee benefits and compliance. The firm is ranked as one of the top labor and employment law firms in New Jersey.

How did your firm come to know NAMWOLF? Why did you join? The principals of the firm learned of NAMWOLF based upon the recommendation of Joe West at Wal-Mart, one of NAMWOLF's corporate partners.

NUKK-FREEMAN
& CERRA, P.C.
EMPLOYMENT ATTORNEYS

TEAMING WITH EMPLOYERS
TO BUILD A BETTER WORKPLACE

Please name some corporate clients of the firm. Wal-Mart, Prudential, Capital One and MetLife.

Why is diversity important to your firm? The principals of the firm are philosophically committed to diversity. They both started their careers at male dominated firms and were promoted through the ranks. They know the challenges that are presented to women lawyers who have primary responsibility for family obligations but who also want to actively practice law. They also believe that there is a business case for diversity.

What are your thoughts on the Annual Meeting? And what tangible benefits has your firm received from the conference? The principals of the firm loved the Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. They especially appreciated making connections with other law firms, sharing ideas and best practices and establishing a network of other NAM-

(Continued on page 11)

Spotlight — Member Firm: Nukk-Freeman & Cerra, P.C., cont'd.

(Continued from page 10)

WOLF firms. A NAMWOLF firm referred a piece of business to the firm as a result of their interactions at the Annual Meeting.

Anything specific you loved about either the Annual Meeting in D.C. or the Business Meeting in South Beach, Florida? During the business meeting, the firm loved participated in a dine around that, by happenstance, was comprised of all NAMWOLF law firm members. The conversation among the five women who attended was very candid and engaging and the participants walked away with a real sense of community with one another.

Tell me about your recent victories, special recognitions and awards? The firm has received numerous awards recognizing its diversity efforts including the Top Small Business in New Jersey, Top Diversity Owned Businesses in New Jersey, Top Woman Owned Business in New Jersey and Top Five Hundred Emerging Businesses in America in 2009 and 2010. In 2009, the firm was recognized with the Better Business Enterprise National Star by the WBENC, the SBA's NJ Women in Business Champion of the Year for 2009, Inc. 5000 List for Growing Businesses, where the firm was ranked 539 and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility in 2009. Additionally, Suzanne Cerra was recently recognized as one of the Best 50 Women in Business by *NJ Biz*. She has also been recognized as a Top 50 Woman Lawyer in New Jersey as well as a Top 100 Lawyer in New Jersey by *Super Lawyers*. Additionally, Katherin Nukk-Freeman was recognized as a Top 50 Woman Lawyer in New Jersey by *Super Lawyers* as well as the Enterprising Women of the Year 2010 by *Enterprising Women Magazine*.

What are you firm's long term goals? The firm wants to continue to be a law firm that is known for providing excellent services to its clients. While doing so, they want to continue to provide a personal environment for their employees, 100% of whom are women, and to provide the flexibility to allow the firm's lawyers to practice law while at the same time, raising their children.

What has been your involvement with NAMWOLF? For how long? The firm joined NAMWOLF in the Spring of 2010. Members have attended two Business Meetings and the Annual Meeting in D.C. They are excited about the annual meeting in Las Vegas.

You can reach [Nukk-Freeman & Cerra](#) at 973-564-9100.

Intellectual Property

By Jose I. Rojas, Rojas Law Firm, LLP. - Miami, FL
Co-Chair, NAMWOLF IP Alliance

The Intellectual Property ("IP") Alliance recently participated as an exhibitor at the AIPLA Spring Conference in San Francisco, CA. We were able to meet and speak with many in-house counsel who were not aware of NAMWOLF and also meet new representatives (who handle IP matters) from companies that are already involved in NAMWOLF. It was a great kick-off event for the IP Alliance. Thank you to Jane Kalata (NAMWOLF) for her untiring support and work during the event. Jose Rojas (Rojas Law Firm) and Nancy Mertz (Donovan & Yee) attended the AIPLA Conference and represented the IP Alliance at the various meetings and seminars. They handed out a good number of our IP Alliance one page flyer and NAMWOLF Annual Meeting invitations to in-house counsel.

The IP Alliance has developed an ambitious Ten Step Plan to create more awareness and opportunities for law firm members and corporate partners that are a part of the Alliance. We will roll out the plan at the Annual Meeting and begin implementation in this upcoming year. If you are interested in joining please contact Jane Kalata at jane_kalata@namwolf.org. We would like all NAMWOLF member firms with substantial IP practices and all Corporate Partners with IP interest to join us in this effort.

The author of this Spotlight article, Laura Gibson, is one of four partners who founded [Ogden, Gibson, Broocks, Longoria & Hall, L.L.P.](#) in 1993. The firm is certified as a Women's Business Enterprise by the WBENC. Prior to forming the firm, Ms. Gibson was a trial partner with the firm which is now known as Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell in Houston, Texas. Ms. Gibson is Board Certified in Labor and Employment Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. She has extensive trial and appellate experience handling complex commercial litigation and arbitrations in areas involving employment, energy, securities, banking, copyright and communications law.

