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on-point and cost-effective.”*

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## *Stephanie Scharf Speaks at Federal Court Symposium, “May It Please the Court”*

On April 12, 2018, Partner [Stephanie Scharf](#) addressed an audience of over 450 attorneys attending a special symposium, “[May It Please the Court](#),” sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. The program featured notable members of the judiciary, chief legal officers and law firm leaders, and addressed strategies and best practices to empower women as lead counsel and trial counsel in litigation.

This is the second symposium of its kind that the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois has hosted. Both events opened with a summary of the innovative research conducted by Ms. Scharf and reported in the publication, “[First Chairs at Trial: More Women Need Seats at the Table](#),” co-authored with Roberta Liebenberg. Based on a random sample of all cases filed in 2013 in the Northern District of Illinois, the study provided the first-ever empirical data about the extent to which women are consistently under-represented in lead counsel positions across many different types of cases, and offered best practices for advancing women into lead counsel roles.

At the April 12 symposium, the First Chairs research was highlighted along with a 2017 study spearheaded by former Judge Shira Sheindlin, which shows similar gender effects in New York state and federal courts. Distinguished speakers on each of the five panels addressed what progress has been made in advancing women as lead counsel, and the factors that impact change. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Chicago Bar Association in conjunction with the Black Women Lawyers’ Association and the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois.