

Katten Celebrates Women's History Month With Former US Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch

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(CHICAGO) Katten announced today that its Women's Leadership Forum hosted former US Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch for a virtual fireside chat in honor of Women's History Month, spotlighting her many contributions and accomplishments.

"It was very much a man's world," said Yovanovitch, reflecting on the start of her diplomatic career when she joined the US Department of State in 1986. In her first Foreign Service posting in Somalia, she was a woman in a position of authority — one of only two female officers — supervising 60 men on her team at the embassy. "There was a lot of fighting stereotypes, trying to belong, but also setting our own path as well," she said.

Yovanovitch served three tours as a US Ambassador in Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan before retiring from the Foreign Service in 2020. She is the author of the memoir *Lessons from the Edge*, a *New York Times* bestseller, in which she shares experiences from her public service career. Yovanovitch, who has received numerous presidential and State Department awards, is currently a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a non-resident Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University.

Although it can be challenging for women to pursue advancement in such a high-pressure career while handling family obligations, Yovanovitch acknowledged, the higher up the ladder they climb, the more control they can have over how they manage their time and careers.

"One of the things we need to do in the Foreign Service, and in our society as a whole, is figure out ways to give women and men — because certainly the men I know are interested in having a greater role in their children's upbringing — the flexibility to do their job and to do a good job, as well as fully participate in family life," she said.

In that regard, the legal industry faces a similar challenge, said Kenya Woodruff, national chair of Katten's Women's Leadership Forum, which supports the growth and advancement of female attorneys through various initiatives, programs and events. She encourages women to forge ahead.

"In the beginning, it's tough because you don't have as much control over the scheduling of meetings, but as you progress and become equity partner and you're bringing in the work, you do have more control over your life," Woodruff said. "There is a continuum. There's the time when it's really tough, but it's not going to be like that forever. There is some light on the other side."

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