

# Hard work leads to Benesch partnership

By [David Thomas](#)

*Law Bulletin staff writer*

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Sarah M. Hesse

It's a big day for any lawyer when she goes from being an associate to a partner at her firm. For Sarah M. Hesse, that just happened.

The 32-year-old St. Paul, Minn., native was one of six attorneys who became partners last month at Benesch. As a corporate and securities lawyer, Hesse advises public companies as to compliance with rules set by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and stock exchanges. She also works on a variety of corporate transactions like mergers and acquisitions and go-private transactions.

Hesse's interest in law was first sparked by an undergraduate class she took at Marquette University in Milwaukee. She graduated from Loyola University Chicago School of Law in 2009.

In a written Q&A with the Daily Law Bulletin, Hesse discussed why she has remained at a law firm that has grown considerably in size since October 2016.

**CDLB:** *How does it feel to have made partner at your firm? Is it everything you expected?*

**Hesse:** I'm thrilled to have made partner! It feels great to be recognized for the work and time I've put into my practice. It's only been a few weeks, but I have to say, it's delivered on my expectations. The partnership has been very welcoming and I'm very much looking forward to contributing to the growth of the firm as a partner in the rapidly expanding Chicago office.

**CDLB:** *What has kept you at Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLC? Why not become a partner elsewhere?*

**Hesse:** Two things — the incredible people here and the exciting growth of the Chicago office. As with any job, at the end of the day, I've found what matters the most is the people you're working with — and the attorneys here at Benesch are both great lawyers and great people. Benesch is very culture-focused and I've developed incredible friendships in my time here.

In addition to the people here, it's been a lot of fun to be involved in the growth of the firm's Chicago office. I was the ninth or 10th attorney to join the Chicago office, and we are now at almost 50 attorneys. Throughout my time here, I continue to be impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit at both the firm and attorney level. I appreciate how the firm recognizes attorneys' different approaches to their practice and really supports attorneys as individuals.

**CDLB:** *What got you into law in the first place?*

**Hesse:** As a junior in college, I took a constitutional law class that was styled like a law school class. We read Supreme Court cases and the professor used the Socratic method. It was the toughest class I took in undergrad — I remember walking out of the midterm thinking, "I may have just failed that test, but I love this class." That made me think I might like law school. From there, I took the LSAT, applied for law school and ended up going to law school in Chicago after graduating from college.

Once I started practicing, I was really drawn to securities laws. When I started, there were a lot of changes that had either just been adopted or were brewing. The SEC had just adopted the proxy disclosure enhancement rules and say-on-pay followed a few years later.

I had a lot of fun working with clients on understanding what these rules meant for them and then working with them to implement the new disclosure. I've always been a rule-follower, so this seemed like a natural fit.

**CDLB:** *What trends have you noticed in your practice?*

**Hesse:** Generally speaking, one thing I've noticed in this industry is that clients are really looking for partnerships. There are a ton of great attorneys out there and

clients are looking for attorneys that are willing to invest in the client relationship — truly getting to know the client’s business, understanding the needs and worries of the client, and acting as a partner/trusted adviser.

More specifically, within the securities and corporate governance space, one trend I’ve noticed is an effort by public companies to provide investors with more digestible, meaningful information. For example, the evolution of annual meeting proxy statements in the past several years has been fascinating. These have gone from (typically) being dry disclosure documents to, now, companies are creating dynamic proxy statements that really tell the company’s story and are a way to engage with investors.

**CDLB:** *What are your long-term goals for your legal career?*

**Hesse:** Over the next few years, I’m really excited to help grow Benesch’s Chicago office. It has been incredible to watch the ranks of the Chicago office grow with a group of very talented, exciting attorneys.

**CDLB:** *What is the first app you use on your smartphone when you wake up in the morning?*

**Hesse:** After checking my e-mail — Instagram.

**CDLB:** *What TV show did you just finish binge-watching?*

**Hesse:** “Bodyguard” on Netflix. It came highly recommended by some friends, plus I’m a huge fan of the James Bond movies, so I had to check out Richard Madden’s work here, as he may be a frontrunner as James Bond when Daniel Craig’s tenure is over.