Patricia Gillette is a well-known name in the legal industry. Now an author, speaker, and widely recognized expert on gender diversity and equality, Gillette also has a formidable reputation as a top-notch employment law litigator for Fortune 100 clients.

Her litigation career took off while she was heading the Personnel Law Section of the Legal Department at Bank of America. As one of the few in-house counsels trying cases, Gillette became the “go to” advisor for her colleagues in other financial institutions, helping them evaluate their litigation matters. A frequent speaker at employment law conferences on trial tactics and strategy, her reputation continued to grow.

Upon leaving Bank of America, Gillette went to a boutique firm, bringing the Bank’s employment litigation. Given her financial services industry expertise, she was retained by nearly every major financial institution in California.

Gillette’s reputation as a charismatic trial lawyer led other clients to her door as she developed a large book of business that would continue through her 40 years of practice. Moving to Heller Ehrman to head up their Employment Law Practice Group and later to Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP, she took her place as a firm leader and a top rainmaker.

In 2006, Gillette co-founded the Opt-In Project, a nationwide initiative, focused on redefining best practices by changing the structure of law firms. The 2007 Opt-In Report was instrumental in shifting the focus surrounding the retention of women from a ‘part-time’ centric ideal to the structural barriers that were negatively impacting women. This study was the first of its kind to garner national attention on these issues and became a catalyst for change.

During her tenure with Heller and Orrick, Gillette chaired the women’s initiatives, received numerous honors and awards from state and national organizations for her work to advance women, and was routinely listed as one of the top women employment litigators in California.

She also served as a member of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession from 2010 to 2013, and on the ABA Task Force on Gender Equity, co-chairing the Model Compensation Committee, which published materials to help bring more pay equity to women lawyers’ compensation. From 2009–2012, she co-chaired the San Francisco Bar Association’s No Glass Ceiling Initiative, designing several events including a symposium co-sponsored by the Commission on Women connecting female general counsels with law firm managing partners to underscore the need for more female leadership in law firms. Gillette currently serves as a board member and Chair of Development for DirectWomen, a nonprofit dedicated to preparing women lawyers to serve on public company boards, and serves on the board of Equal Rights Advocates.

In December of 2013, Lawyer Metrics completed a study identifying the characteristics of successful rainmakers. Gillette was the driving force behind this initiative. The study concluded that rainmaker characteristics are not gender-based, but instead rooted in the ability to build relationships. Gillette now speaks nationally on the results of the study to law firm attorneys.

Gillette also lays claim to the Mansfield Rule, developed by the team she co-chaired at the 2016 Hackathon. This rule, which requires that 30% of candidates for leadership positions be women or minorities, has been adopted by 40+ firms. Gillette believes the increased visibility for these underrepresented groups will expand their leadership opportunities.

After 40 years as an employment lawyer, rainmaker, firm leader, and litigator, Gillette resigned from her partnership with Orrick in 2015 to focus on speaking and writing, but her reputation as a problem solver who could find reasonable solutions for all parties did not go unnoticed. She was invited to join JAMS and now spends time mediating employment cases.

Gillette is also busy writing articles and creating literature that will inspire future generations of women lawyers. Her writing is featured in chapter two of Beyond Bias: Unleashing the Potential of Women in Law, released in June 2017, where she highlights solutions to increase the number of women in positions of power and authority in firms and corporations. Her book, Rainmakers: Born or Bred, published in November 2017, provides a roadmap for how attorneys can use the Rainmaking Study results to enhance their business development efforts. Gillette’s legacy in the legal profession will continue through the many mentees she has coached, teaching them to vie for leadership positions, negotiate for appropriate compensation, and be their own best advocate. She credits her husband of 44 years and her enlightened and accomplished sons for allowing her to just be her.

Her commitment to guiding, influencing, and championing other women lawyers, while simultaneously challenging the traditional structure of the legal industry to leave the legal profession in a better state than when she found it, makes Patricia Gillette a shining example of what a Margaret Brent recipient should be.