

June 30, 2026

Gould & Ratner Celebrates the Retirement of Chief Administrative Officer Laura Sears After 37 Years of Service

Gould & Ratner is proud to celebrate the retirement of Chief Administrative Officer Laura Sears, whose remarkable 37-year career has left an indelible mark on the firm, its people, and the legal management profession.

Laura joined Gould & Ratner in 1989 as Assistant Administrator before being named Office Administrator in 1991 and CAO in 2016. Throughout that time, she has played an integral role in the firm's growth and evolution. Over nearly four decades, she helped guide the firm's operations while fostering a culture rooted in collaboration, connection, and care for others. As CAO, Laura continued to champion initiatives that strengthened the employee experience and reinforced Gould & Ratner's commitment to its people.

"What stands out most about Laura is how deeply she cares about the people around her," said Ken Koehn, Chief Operating Officer of Gould & Ratner. "Throughout moments of celebration, transition, and challenge, she has always made sure that people felt seen and supported. Over 37 years, she has been relentless in finding new and meaningful ways to bring our people together, always with the goal of making Gould & Ratner a place people truly enjoy. She leaves behind not just a legacy of leadership, but a workplace culture shaped by her heart."

Beyond her contributions to the firm, Laura has been a highly respected leader within the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA). A member since 1990, she served as President of the ALA Chicago Chapter in both 2001 and 2019 and was honored with the chapter's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020. Through numerous volunteer and leadership roles, she has mentored colleagues, supported the next generation of legal administrators, and helped advance the profession.

"Laura's impact extends far beyond any single role or organization," said Travis Armstrong, Immediate Past President of the ALA. "Through decades of service, mentorship, and leadership, she has helped shape the legal management profession and supported the growth of countless colleagues along the way. She brings tremendous knowledge and experience to everything she does, but what truly sets her apart is the genuine care she has for others. We are all better for having worked with her, and I am honored to call her a friend."

Reflecting on her career, Laura expressed gratitude for the people and experiences that defined her time at the firm.

"After over 37 years at Gould & Ratner, it is difficult to put into words what this firm has meant to me," Laura said. "I have been fortunate to spend my career surrounded by incredibly talented, dedicated, and caring people who have enriched my life both professionally and personally. Together, we celebrated successes, navigated challenges, and built relationships that I will treasure forever. I am grateful for every opportunity, every friendship, and every memory. While I look forward to this next chapter, Gould & Ratner will always hold a special place in my heart."

As Laura retires, Deb O'Donnell will succeed her as CAO. Deb joined the firm in May of this year as Incoming CAO.

"Gould & Ratner's culture has always been one of its greatest strengths, and I know Deborah shares a deep appreciation for what makes this firm special," Laura said. "She is a thoughtful leader who cares about people, values collaboration, and is committed to helping our team thrive. I leave knowing the firm is in very capable hands."

Laura's contributions to Gould & Ratner are impossible to measure solely by years of service or professional accomplishments. Her leadership, generosity, and commitment to others have helped shape the firm into what it is today. We thank Laura for her extraordinary service and wish her every happiness and success in the years ahead.

CONGRATULATIONS, LAURA SEARS



**Retiring After 37 Years at
Gould & Ratner**