

Rising Star: Jenner & Block's Amna Arshad

Law360 (August 23, 2018, 2:54 PM EDT) -- Amna Arshad of Jenner & Block LLP is a public policy expert on aviation regulation and litigation, counseling major airlines on high-profile matters including the Trump administration's regulatory rollback and the U.K.'s Brexit, earning her a spot as one of four transportation law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

WHAT DREW HER TO TRANSPORTATION:

The transportation industry's international scope motivated Arshad to cultivate a decadelong career focused on regulatory counseling, commercial aviation transactions and litigation. She has represented major U.S. and foreign air carriers, airports, aerospace manufacturers, travel distribution clients, operators of unmanned aircraft systems or drones, and various other corporations in regulatory matters involving the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board.

"I love working in transportation, aviation in particular, because it's international by nature and a connector of cultures," she said. "I have an international background and it's satisfying to facilitate an industry that brings the world together. Aviation is also an exciting area of the law because it's constantly evolving. With the progression of unmanned and remotely piloted aircraft and other breakthroughs in the industry, there are so many possibilities for the future that it's exciting to be at the forefront."

THE BIGGEST CASE OF HER CAREER:

Before joining Jenner & Block in early 2017, Arshad spent nearly six years in the DOT's Office of Aviation Enforcement & Proceedings, where she was responsible for the enforcement of a variety of aviation consumer protection, licensing and civil rights matters.

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STAR



Amna Arshad
Jenner & Block

Age: 36

Home base: Washington, D.C.

Position: Special Counsel

Law school: American University's Washington College of Law

First job after law school: Clerk for Chief Judge Dennis J. Smith in Virginia

It was there that she worked on one of the biggest cases of her career: One of the first foreign airport inspections involving auditing airline compliance with U.S. government regulations over disability accommodations.

“It involved interacting with front-line airport employees in a foreign jurisdiction and in-house lawyers, and gave me good insight into multiple aspects of airline operations,” she said. “It was a challenge because it required me to work collaboratively on sensitive issues with a foreign airline that could have faced punitive measures for noncompliance with U.S. government regulations. I still draw on my experience handling the audit in my practice today.”

HER PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATTORNEY:

Though she finds it rewarding serving as a go-to adviser on aviation matters, Arshad says her most standout moment as an attorney came when she was a student working in her law school immigration clinic. She secured a green card for her client, a 19-year-old asylum seeker from Somalia.

“To this day, I’m very active in providing pro bono services [on] immigration rights, and Jenner & Block has been extremely supportive of that,” she said.

Her pro bono and immigration rights practice extends to serving on the legal advisory committee for the Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights, or CAIR, Coalition, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit whose public interest and legal services programs focus on assisting detained immigrants.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

As an immigrant herself, Arshad says she knows firsthand the sacrifices that families make to seize opportunities, and that continues to push her today. Arshad was born in Pakistan and spent her early childhood years in the Middle East before her family moved to the United States when she was almost 9 years old.

“I’m a first-generation immigrant. My parents sacrificed their comfortable lives in their home country to come to the States for opportunities for me and my siblings,” she said. “Their sacrifice really motivates me to advocate about the issues facing immigrants and refugees today.”

“I’m also the first woman in my family to have an advanced degree,” she added. “I’m a working mom of three. So I want my kids and my two daughters in particular to see that it’s possible to balance a fulfilling career with having a family.”

Arshad also uses her platform to promote diversity and inclusion.

“Diversity and inclusion helps law firms and companies significantly. I truly believe that a key part of it is to encourage people to be their authentic selves,” she said. “And I think it’s really important to be somewhere that shares my values. I’m lucky that my team at Jenner & Block is supportive.”

HER ADVICE FOR YOUNGER ATTORNEYS:

“Don’t settle for anything less than what you deserve, which is a nurturing work environment and supportive mentors that will be committed to helping you thrive,” Arshad said. “It’s easy to settle for less, but I really encourage to look for a place that will truly value you for all the different parts of you.”

— *As told to Linda Chiem*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2018 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.

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