



Julie Rikelman

CONFIRMED

Confirmed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit

COURT

District Court

DATE NOMINATED

January 10, 2024

DATE CONFIRMED

June 20, 2023

On August 1, 2022, President Joe Biden **nominated** Julie Rikelman to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. The current U.S. Litigation Director for the Center for Reproductive Rights, Rikelman is a veteran civil rights litigator known for her work protecting reproductive rights in state and federal courts throughout the country. She also spent a decade in various corporate litigation practices.

Biography

Julie Rikelman was born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1972. When she was six years old, her family immigrated to the United States after they experienced discrimination due to their Jewish heritage in the former Soviet Union. Barely speaking English, they settled in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1979. When they arrived, Rikelman's parents had limited finances, no promised employment, and relied on government assistance and non-profit organizations to make ends meet.

Rikelman learned English as a second language and said that seeing her family's struggle shaped her interest in civil rights. She went on to earn her bachelor's degree, magna cum laude, and law degree, cum laude, from Harvard in 1993 and 1997.

Legal Experience

Following law school, Rikelman clerked for two appellate judges: Justice Dana Fabe, the first woman justice on Alaska Supreme Court, and Judge Morton I. Greenberg, a Reagan appointee on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. From 1999 to 2001, she was a Blackmun Fellow at the Center for Reproductive Rights. The fellowship's namesake, Justice Blackmun, was a Nixon appointee who wrote the Supreme Court's majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*. During her two-year fellowship, Rikelman helped litigate numerous reproductive rights cases around the country, including serving as lead counsel in two federal district court matters and second-chairing a one-week trial in state court.

From 2001 to 2011, Rikelman worked in private practice in various capacities. She started as an Associate at Feldman

& Orlansky in Anchorage, Alaska, handling a wide range of civil and criminal trials and appeals in state and federal courts. Rikelman's caseload spanned the gamut — from commercial breach of contract to redistricting and medical malpractice. In 2004, she returned to the East Coast, joining Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP's New York office as a Senior Associate focused on complex commercial cases. There, Rikelman typically represented large corporations, including defending JPMorgan Chase Bank in multi-party, securities fraud litigation. In 2006, she joined the media conglomerate NBC Universal as in-house litigation counsel, where she served as lead counsel for cases involving defamation, intellectual property, breach of contract, and the First Amendment. Rikelman was promoted to Vice President of Litigation during her last year at NBC Universal.

In 2011, Rikelman returned to the Center for Reproductive Rights as a senior staff attorney and rose to her current role as U.S. Litigation Director the following year. In this capacity, Rikelman has litigated high-profile reproductive rights cases on behalf of health care providers and other organizations nationwide, in addition to leading the Center's U.S. litigation strategy overall and playing a supervisory role for junior attorneys.

Representative Cases

Rikelman is a highly experienced litigator who has argued and briefed dozens of procedural and substantive motions; tried seven cases in state and federal court; and argued six appeals, including two in the U.S. Supreme Court. Her career has been a mix of public interest and corporate litigation, giving her experience with many areas of law, from securities fraud to environmental and constitutional law. The following cases are illustrative of her record:

Corporate and Election Law

During her decade in private practice, Rikelman handled a variety of corporate law cases. For example, in [*DiFolco v. MSNBC*](#), Rikelman was lead counsel for all NBC defendants from 2006 to 2011. The case involved claims of breach of contract, tortious interference, and defamation. Rikelman successfully removed the case from state to federal court, then handled the bulk of proceedings in the Southern District of New York and Second Circuit. Ultimately, most of the claims were dismissed and the parties settled the remaining claim. She also served as co-counsel for JPMorgan Chase in [*CFS. v. J.P. Morgan*](#), a multi-party, securities fraud case. CFS, an Oklahoma corporation that bought and collected consumer debt receivables "charged off" by their original holders, sued Chase for professional negligence and breach of fiduciary duties. Chase cross-sued, arguing that CFS hid knowledge that its business model was failing long enough to bilk investors, creditors, and bankers of more than \$1.5 billion. Rikelman was involved in all key aspects of litigation, including drafting briefs and motions and taking and defending depositions.

Rikelman also has election law experience, including serving as co-counsel for the Native-Interest Intervenors in [*In re 2001 Redistricting Cases*](#). The cases, which were resolved on an expedited basis, required discovery, trial, briefing, and two appeals to the Alaska Supreme Court in a six-month period. Ultimately, the Alaska high court upheld the Board's final amended redistricting plan in favor of Rikelman's clients.

Reproductive Rights

Rikelman is a reproductive rights expert, having litigated cases involving abortion bans, clinic closing laws, invasive ultrasound laws, access to medication abortion, and more. She is best known for arguing two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. The first, [*June Medical Services v. Russo*](#), involved a challenge to a Louisiana law that required all physicians providing abortion care to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. The Center for Reproductive Rights represented an abortion provider and two physicians who argued that the law imposed significant burdens on abortion access without providing any benefit to pregnant people's health or safety. Rikelman provided strategic oversight of the case in the lower federal courts and presented oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court in March 2020. Agreeing with Rikelman, the Court struck down Louisiana's abortion restriction as an unconstitutional undue burden. This victory preserved critical access to abortion in Louisiana by permanently blocking a law that would have shuttered most of the state's clinics.

The second case, [*Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*](#), involved a challenge to a Mississippi law banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, two months before viability. The Center for Reproductive Rights represented the last Mississippi abortion clinic, which argued that the law violated the right to liberty under *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The district court agreed, holding that the law was unconstitutional under Supreme Court precedent and permanently enjoined it. Mississippi appealed, and the conservative Fifth Circuit unanimously affirmed the district court ruling. Mississippi then sought and received certiorari from the U.S. Supreme Court. Rikelman was involved in all key aspects of litigation, including conducting oral argument before the Supreme Court in December 2021. Despite Rikelman's powerful arguments, the Court ultimately reversed both lower court decisions, overruled *Roe* and *Casey*, and upheld the Mississippi law.

Rikelman has participated as counsel in several other Supreme Court cases. For example, in [*Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*](#), the Center for Reproductive Rights filed a lawsuit on behalf of five Texas clinics and three physicians and their patients, challenging a law that imposed admitting privileges requirements. Rikelman drafted the petition for a writ of certiorari and multiple briefs for petitioners. Ultimately, the Supreme Court sided with the Center and struck down the law, reaffirming the constitutional right to abortion.

Additionally, she represented abortion health care providers before federal appellate courts.¹ For example, in [*Jackson Women's Health Organization v. Currier*](#), the Center for Reproductive Rights filed a lawsuit on behalf of Mississippi's last abortion clinic, challenging a law which required physicians associated with an abortion facility to maintain admitting privileges at a local hospital and to be board-certified or eligible in obstetrics and gynecology. A federal district court granted a temporary restraining order and partial preliminary injunction. Rikelman served as lead counsel on appeal in the Fifth Circuit, drafting the appellate briefs and presenting at oral argument; the court affirmed in the clinic's favor. She also led the briefing to oppose petitions for rehearing and certiorari, both of which were denied.

¹ In a similar case, *Stuart v. Camnitz*, the Center for Reproductive Rights represented several North Carolina physicians and medical groups, challenging a law requiring abortion providers to display and describe ultrasound images to patients seeking an abortion. The Fourth Circuit ruled unanimously in the plaintiffs' favor and the Supreme Court denied a writ of certiorari, leaving the North Carolina law permanently enjoined. Rikelman spearheaded all aspects of the case, including serving as counsel of record in briefing the U.S. Supreme Court.

Accolades and Pro Bono Work

Throughout her career, Rikelman has received numerous awards for her public interest work, including the American Association of Justice (AAJ) Leonard Weinglass in Defense of Civil Liberties Award in 2022. In addition to her work at the Center for Reproductive Rights, which is a nonprofit organization, while in private practice she regularly represented clients on a pro bono basis and won the National Law Journal Pro Bono Award in 2004.