

All-Women Litigation Team Lands First Reproductive Rights Win After 'Dobbs' Overturns 'Roe'

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By Bruce Love
June 27, 2022

Barely an hour after filing a temporary restraining order to block new abortion laws in Louisiana on Monday, Boies Schiller Flexner appears to have recorded the first legal win in the fight to protect women’s reproductive rights after the U.S. Supreme Court’s Friday decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*—reflecting the result of weeks of preparation leading up to the landmark decision.

The team, led by Boies Schiller partner Joanna Wright, filed for emergency relief Monday at 9:34 a.m. CT and was informed of the TRO’s approval around 11 a.m.

On behalf of its client, Hope Medical Group for Women, the Boies Schiller team was challenging three new abortion laws in Louisiana designed to trigger after the court had overturned *Roe v. Wade* in its Friday decision in *Dobbs*.

The order blocks the state from implementing three laws written to come into effect once *Roe* was overturned, immediately banning and criminalizing all abortions in the state. The TRO effectively gives Louisiana women two weeks’ grace until at least the hearing scheduled for July 8.

A spokesperson for Boies Schiller said that by 1:20 p.m. CT on Monday, its client’s clinics were able to resume providing patients with care.

Boies Schiller is challenging what it sees as unconstitutionally “vague” laws written by the



(Clockwise from top left) Sabina Mariella, Brianna Hills, Joanna Wright and Lindsey Ruff of Boies Schiller Flexner.

Courtesy photos

Republican-led Legislature. The firm—with local co-counsel Ellie Schilling and Jenny Ma of the Center for Reproductive Rights—claims it is impossible to tell whether the trigger laws are actually in effect and, if so, which ones. The petition also questions what conduct would be prohibited by the trigger laws, including what exceptions exist for doctors performing procedures to save a pregnant person’s life.

Anticipating the overturning of *Roe* since a draft *Dobbs* decision was leaked earlier this year, the team

had spent weeks on the suit, drafting and redrafting multiple arguments to cover every possible outcome that could arise from *Dobbs* and the Louisiana Legislature's response.

"We filed for emergency relief in a lawsuit on Monday for a decision that came down Friday, but we've been preparing for the last six weeks without knowing the landscape, what the *Dobbs* opinion was going to be, and what the state of reproductive health would be in the United States," said Wright. "This opinion was one of many different possible opinions that could have come down."

That complexity meant that even after weeks of work, the team's Louisiana filing needed to be completed in a matter of hours.

"We had to be nimble and alert to the developing facts. A huge amount happened in the first 12 hours after *Dobbs* was issued. We pivoted immediately on how the new laws would impact our clients and our legal claims," said Wright. "In this fast-moving situation, you need creative thinkers and very intellectually strong lawyers. But you also need people with a lot of heart and a lot of grit."

Seventy percent of the team's initial legal strategy got thrown in the trash by Friday morning. "And they were really good arguments. None of us have slept for three days," said Wright.

The all-women Boies Schiller team comprises Wright, a litigator who also serves as the firm's New York recruiting partner, and associates Brianna Hills, Sabina Mariella and Lindsey Ruff, and paralegal Isabelle Wilkinson. Wright, who is on extended maternity leave, came back to work specifically to handle the matter.

Of the lawyers she selected for her team, Wright said it was almost incidental that they were all women.

"The New York City office is genuinely chock full of superstars. I would have been lucky to have had anyone in the office on this team," said Wright. "I knew Sabina, Brianna, and Lindsey would be both substantively committed to this issue, as well as technically elite."

Ruff said working on the matter was "deeply important" to her. She was her law school's vice president for lawyering for reproductive justice, and had worked with Wright on an amicus brief for *Dobbs* that Boies Schiller filed on behalf of 500 women athletes.

"Knowing I had control over my body and reproductive future is such a big part of what I've been able to achieve personally, and I know that this decision is going to disproportionately harm women who don't have all the same privileges that I do," said Ruff. "Being able to use our skills as attorneys, and to dedicate our law firm's resources to protecting the rights of women has been such a meaningful and gratifying experience. Being on this team of all women attorneys—some of whom are my best friends—has been both exciting and emotional, given the issues and the stakes."

For Mariella, the Louisiana emergency relief suit has not been her first high-profile matter since joining Boies Schiller in 2019. Already she has worked on suits against Ghislaine Maxwell, Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend and accomplice in acts of sexual abuse, and against Epstein's estate. She was on the team that sued Britain's Prince Andrew on claims of sexual assault.

"If you had told me five years ago that I would be part of a team that figured out how to sue British royalty, I would not have believed you," said Mariella. "I've only been at the firm for three years and already I've had some great moments. We like a challenge and to figure out ways to make the impossible happen."

Ruff said the amount of "substantive responsibility" she has been given as an associate at Boies Schiller is significant compared with her friends from law school.

"Working in small, tight-knit teams on high-stakes cases, and getting to do the work ourselves and be involved in the decision-making is so gratifying, and I think is unique to [Boies Schiller]," said Ruff.