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## Rising Star: Pillsbury's Anne Leidich

By **Keith Goldberg**

Law360 (July 13, 2023, 9:16 AM EDT) -- Anne Leidich of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP has become a go-to lawyer for the nuclear energy industry, earning her a spot among the energy law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 **Rising Stars**.





## Anne Leidich

Pillsbury Winthrop

**Age:** 37

**Home base:** Washington, D.C.

**Position:** Partner

**Law school:** George Washington University Law School

**First job after law school:** Associate at Pillsbury

### ***HOW SHE BECAME A NUCLEAR LAWYER:***

Nuclear energy is the family business for Leidich. Her father and uncle were electrical engineers who worked at nuclear plants — her father helped license the Perry nuclear plant in Ohio — and her brother works on industry supply chain issues.

"It was natural to go into nuclear engineering and pursue a career in this industry," Leidich said. "It feels like home."

Leidich got her undergraduate degree in nuclear engineering at Purdue University and worked on fuel licensing at nuclear power manufacturer Westinghouse Electric Co. Much of that work involved interpreting federal nuclear regulations and dealing with regulators like the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Leidich saw law school and working in D.C. as an opportunity to influence future nuclear policy.

Leidich also minored in English in college, which she said was a pretty rare combination.

"In fact, most of my colleagues at school were horrified to find out that I was an English minor because most of them didn't like to write," Leidich said. "I also wanted to write for a living, and certainly, being a lawyer means that you write for a living."

### ***HER MOST CHALLENGING CASE:***

Leidich helped the Tennessee Valley Authority beat an employment discrimination case brought by the NRC's enforcement office. She drafted and argued the TVA's key arguments that an employee's complaint and the resulting investigation aren't

adverse employment actions that can form the basis of violations of the NRC's employee discrimination regulations.

The NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board agreed and summarily disposed of three employment discrimination violations in November 2021.

"That has far-reaching impacts on the industry because it was a significant clarification in terms what an adverse employment action is, and what NRC enforcement looks like going forward," Leidich said. "That particular case was difficult because we were essentially dipping our toes into employment law."

### **OTHER CASES SHE'S WORKED ON:**

Leidich's nuclear practice runs the gamut, from litigation and regulatory counseling to deal work. She handled regulatory work for Brookfield Renewable Partners in its joint **\$8 billion purchase** of Westinghouse with partner Cameco Corp. announced in October. She also helped NextEra Energy Inc. in 2021 extend the operating license for its Point Beach nuclear plant in Wisconsin until the 2050s.

Leidich has also helped Holtec International secure a license from the NRC for a proposed interim nuclear waste storage facility in New Mexico, after years of challenges to the application process. That process is currently being challenged in the D.C. Circuit.

"Consolidated interim storage is such a new area; there have been licenses issued for facilities, but no one's ever really built and operated one," Leidich said. "It's a win for the industry in a sense that it's a potential solution going forward for some of the needs that the industry has."

### **WHAT MOTIVATES HER:**

At bottom, Leidich is a fan of nuclear power and its capabilities.

"I have a lot of faith in the industry, and a lot of belief that it can be used to help solve a lot of our problems, particularly in terms of climate change and carbon reduction," Leidich said. "It's also a passion project: I want to see the industry do well, I want to see it succeed."

Leidich said she's excited about the recent advances in nuclear reactor design that could fill key gaps in efforts to decarbonize the power sector and combat climate change.

"I really would love to see that happen, I think that it's long overdue," Leidich said. "Making sure that those facilities are licensed, that they get to operate and get their opportunity to shine, is something that really motivates me."

### **HOW SHE THINKS HER PRACTICE WILL CHANGE IN 10 YEARS:**

Leidich is bullish on the future of her practice, saying the increasing urgency of combating climate change will help nuclear power turn the corner from a static industry facing numerous plant closures to a place where it's a larger piece of the U.S. energy pie.

Leidich said she's seeing more and more interest from investors outside the industry and believes more licensing of new facilities could happen within a few years.

"Three years ago, I would have never said that," Leidich said. "Three years ago, we were decommissioning power plants; that was the name of the game. It has turned around so much in the last three years, and I think a lot of it is the fact that climate change has come home to roost. It's so much more of an urgent issue."

*--As told to Keith Goldberg.*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2023 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of May 1, 2023, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*

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