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Alexis Cirel of Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas. Courtesy photo

Schwartz Sladkus Adds Three-Attorney Fertility Law Team From Warshaw Burstein

Alexis Cirel was a partner at Schwartz Sladkus from 2019 to 2021. She returns as part of a three-lawyer team that is launching a new fertility practice at Schwartz in New York City.

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By Jon Campisi
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What You Need to Know

- Alexis L. Cirel, a former Schwartz Sladkus partner, has returned to the firm on its 10th anniversary, along with colleagues Eric I. Wrubel and Rose H. Vacanti Gilroy.
- The three-lawyer team will spearhead the firm's newly created fertility law group in New York City.
- Cirel said her own personal experiences with family planning got her interested in this area of the law.

New York-based midsize firm Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas has welcomed aboard a team of fertility law specialists from Warshaw Burstein.

The firm announced the addition of Alexis L. Cirel, a former Schwartz Sladkus partner who is returning to the firm on its 10th anniversary, along with partner Eric I. Wrubel and associate Rose H. Vacanti Gilroy.

The three attorneys will spearhead the firm's brand new fertility law practice, which will offer legal services and counseling in various matters of fertility law, including surrogacy arrangements, parentage establishment proceedings and issues involving sperm, egg and embryo donation agreements.

Cirel, who will lead the new fertility practice, was a partner at Schwartz Sladkus for two years, from 2019 to 2021, and played a large role in the passage of the Child-Parent Security Act in New York, which legalized surrogacy in the state. She had also served on a leadership committee for former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo that was created to support the legislation.

According to Schwartz Sladkus, Cirel is one of only about 200 lawyers in the U.S. to be named an assisted reproductive technologies fellow of the Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys, and she also serves as the co-chair of the legal ethics committee for the Society for Ethical Egg Donation and Surrogacy.

"Like many people who do what I do, it stems from personal experience," Cirel told the New York Law Journal about her nuanced practice.

While she initially worked as a commercial litigator for about 10 years, Cirel opted to switch over to family and fertility law at the time she was trying to start her own family and encountered some difficulties in New York, a state that didn't pass a surrogacy law until 2021.

"There was this really egregious, outdated law in my state," Cirel said. Michigan also had a surrogacy ban that was only just lifted a couple of months ago, she said.

In addition to her day job, Cirel also co-chairs the New York State Bar Association's Surrogacy Subcommittee and is a member of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine's Legal Professionals Group.

Cirel said her decision to rejoin Schwartz Sladkus was not prompted by a bad experience at Warshaw Burstein; on the contrary, she enjoyed her time at that firm, but merely wanted to return to Schwartz Sladkus because the firm felt like home. Frederick R. Cummings, Jr., the managing partner at Warshaw Burstein, said in a statement that the firm was "proud to work with Eric and Alexis to build this practice over the last several years."

"We wish them well," Cummings said of the departing team. "I am pleased to say that we will continue our Fertility Law practice, and look forward to continuing to grow the firm with lateral and associate hires in our core and other niche practice areas." Cirel's practice also tangentially touches on other areas of the law, such as trusts and estate planning, and while she personally doesn't handle that type of work, she partners with others at Schwartz Sladkus who can pitch in and handle those matters. "We know how to address frozen embryos if there is a divorce or somebody dies," she said.

The new fertility law practice, she said, will likely be broken down to about 80% surrogacy work, with the remainder comprised of parentage issues and egg and sperm donor work.

"The integration of this practice into SSRGA represents a powerful combination of talent," Steven Sladkus, the firm's founding partner, said in a statement. "Individuals and families navigating the diverse legal needs that arise during family formation will benefit immensely from the expertise this team of attorneys brings to the firm."

The three new attorneys, who between them are admitted to practice law in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Michigan, often consult on related legal matters domestically and abroad.

Wrubel, who joins alongside Cirel and Vacanti Gilroy, secured a groundbreaking win in a New York Court of Appeals case that resulted in the expansion of the definition of "parent" in the state to include same-sex couples.

Vacanti Gilroy, meanwhile, comes to Schwartz Sladkus as an associate licensed to practice in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. She focuses her practice on matrimonial law, and also handles complex parentage establishment matters. Additionally, she focuses on surrogacy and donor arrangements, as well as legal issues facing LGBTQ+ individuals.

"She's the coolest of all of us," Cirel said jokingly about Vacanti Gilroy. "She's flourishing. She's a third-year associate now."

Vacanti Gilroy, Cirel said, has developed a niche catering to higher net worth lesbian clients, and she envisioned being a highly valued member of the team.