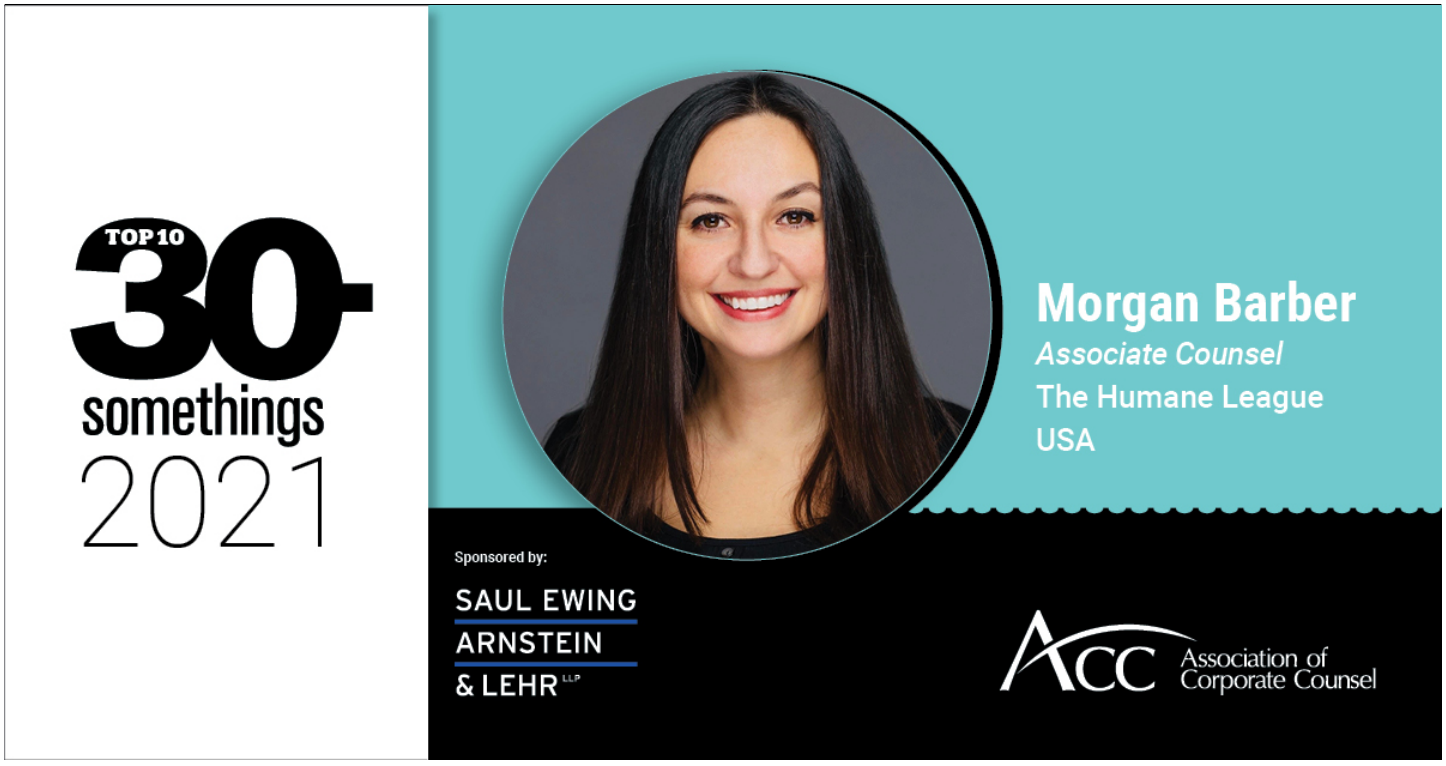
2021 ACC Top 10 30-Something: Morgan Barber

Interviews and Profiles

The ACC Top 10 30-Somethings awards recognize in-house counsel between the ages of 30 and 39 for their innovation, global perspectives, proactive practice, advocacy efforts, and pro bono and community service work.



Morgan Barber has had a single professional goal since deciding to study law: advance legal protections for animals as nonprofit in-house counsel. Now associate counsel at The Humane

League (THL), Morgan has accomplished that goal.

While attending the University of Miami School of Law, Morgan proudly studied animal law and served as the president of the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund, a student branch of the national nonprofit Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Morgan was lucky to attend a law school where animal law was taught. In 2000, only nine law schools offered an animal law course. Today, animal law is taught at more than 160 schools, including the University of Pittsburgh School of Law where it is currently taught by Morgan herself. She has served as an adjunct professor since the 2020 fall semester for two primary reasons: to further promote the practice of animal law, and to help people make informed decisions about legal and societal issues involving animals.

Before Morgan joined the legal field, she worked as a flight attendant. As fate would have it, it was on a plane that she got her foot in the door of in-house law. Sitting next to the general counsel of a South Florida hospital system on a flight to Panama, Morgan cultivated a relationship that led to an in-house counsel internship before she graduated law school. She then worked in-house for two hospital systems and gained “substantial in-house experience in large, nonprofit yet corporate and highly regulated environments,” Morgan says.

> "I was able to apply all those in-house counsel skills to an animal-related nonprofit."

With a demonstrated interest in animal law and tangible corporate experience, Morgan was able to transition easily to an in-house position at Animal Equality and eventually THL. “That’s when my interest in animal advocacy and my interest in making a legal impact connected,” she says. “I was able to apply all those in-house counsel skills to an animal-related nonprofit.”

“The mission of the Humane League is to end the abuse of animals raised for food,” Morgan says. While that does not necessarily mean insisting on veganism like some other organizations, it does mean fighting against factory farming, where thousands of animals are confined indoors under strictly controlled and often abusive conditions in order to maximize production while minimizing costs.

For Morgan specifically, a big part of her work is to make sure THL’s corporate campaign materials do not expose the organization to unnecessary legal risks. “All of our campaign materials go through me for legal review before they’re published,” she says. Every campaign run asking corporations to pledge for better animal welfare standards crosses Morgan’s desk.

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Additionally, Morgan is the organization’s primary employment lawyer, responsible for THL’s state-by-state employment compliance and spearheading a new process to follow each state’s legal updates and develop more frequent collaboration with the human resources department. THL has been a fully remote organization with employees across the United States, even prior to the pandemic. Consequently, THL as an employer must stay informed of, and comply with, the ever-evolving employment laws of at least 20 different states. “That keeps it interesting, for sure,” she jokes.

In her former role as associate counsel at Animal Equality, an international nonprofit organization, Morgan supported the legal aspects of corporate campaigns, undercover investigations, political outreach, and education programs in countries like Spain, Mexico, Brazil, and the United Kingdom. To be effective in this and in her current role, she needs to understand relevant cultural nuances and legal distinctions, such as how Mexico’s moral and economic rights laws differ from intellectual property laws in the United States.

Working remotely has allowed Morgan to move back to rural Pennsylvania, where she and her husband are from. Growing up around farming communities has kept Morgan grounded. She knows and loves nature and understands the symbiosis between it and humanity. Her husband works as a teacher and hay farmer, and she still rides her horses whenever she can, both in competition and recreationally with her husband and three-year-old daughter.

“I’m just happy that I was able to connect the pieces and make something that I’m really proud of today,” she says.

Read more about the 2021 Top 30-Somethings

Rachel G. Leman

Communications Contractor

Association of Corporate Counsel

Before joining ACC as a contractor, Rachel worked as a reporter at at the DC-based congressional publication CQ, the local Illinois paper the Rock Island-Moline Dispatch-Argus, and her college paper the Augustana Observer, where she also served as editor over the Opinions section.