



My Take: Reflecting on a Decade of Growth in the In-house Profession

Community

Law Department Management



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As I prepare to step away from my role at ACC this October, I find myself both humbled and inspired by the extraordinary evolution of the in-house profession during my tenure. One of the greatest privileges of serving as CEO of the Association of Corporate Counsel has been the opportunity to witness, and in a small way contribute to, the transformation of corporate legal practice.

ACC's [latest analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data](#) provides compelling confirmation of what so many of us have felt intuitively: The in-house legal community has not only grown — it has flourished. Looking back across the last decade and a half, three themes stand out to me.

1. An era of unprecedented growth

When I began this journey with you, the in-house profession was still too often described as a “career alternative.” Today, the numbers tell a very different story. Since 2008, the in-house counsel population in the United States has nearly doubled — from 78,000 to 145,000 attorneys. That 87 percent growth far outpaces the increases in law firms (23 percent) and government (38 percent).

This is not just statistical trivia. It signals a fundamental shift in the value corporations place on internal legal expertise. After weathering the Great Recession and a pandemic-induced pause, the acceleration since 2021 reflects something durable: Companies are no longer merely *accepting* in-

house teams; they are *investing* in them as strategic partners who contribute to the success of the business.

2. A profession expanding across the map

The data also confirms what many of you have experienced personally: The geography of in-house practice is changing.

- Large states such as New York, Texas, and Florida have added thousands of positions, mirroring the growing scale of their business economies.
- Smaller states, from Wyoming to Vermont, have seen percentage increases that dramatically expand local opportunities for corporate lawyers.

The lesson here is clear: The in-house profession is no longer confined to a handful of major cities or industries. Opportunities are emerging nationwide, offering new pathways for talented lawyers who want to pair their legal skills with business insight.

3. Concentration reveals strategic hubs

Finally, when we measure the presence of in-house counsel relative to state populations, we see distinct centers of gravity. Washington, D.C. is in a league of its own, with over 500 in-house lawyers for every 100,000 people. The Northeast — New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut — also shows particularly high concentrations, underscoring the region's longstanding role as a hub for financial and corporate leadership.

At the same time, mid-range concentrations in California, Texas, and Florida suggest room for even greater expansion in markets where business growth is already robust.

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What this means for our future

For me, this research is more than an academic exercise. It is a reminder of why associations like ACC matter. Our ability to serve you has always depended on understanding where the profession is headed — anticipating needs before they fully emerge.

The near doubling of the in-house population is not simply a statistic; it is a testament to your collective impact. Corporate legal departments have become engines of compliance, governance, and strategy, reshaping how companies operate and succeed. The shifts in geography and concentration highlight how dynamic, resilient, and adaptive this community truly is.

As I prepare to pass the torch, I leave with immense confidence in the profession's trajectory. The next decade will bring challenges we cannot yet imagine, but the strength of this community — and the data showing how rapidly it has grown — give me every reason to believe that in-house counsel will

continue to lead with vision, creativity, and resolve.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this remarkable journey. It has been the honor of a lifetime to lead the Association of Corporate Counsel, and I wish you every continued success.

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[Veta T. Richardson](#)



Former President & CEO

Association of Corporate Counsel

Veta T. Richardson is the immediate past president and chief executive officer of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC). Headquartered in Washington, DC, ACC is the world's largest legal association dedicated exclusively to serving the interests of in-house counsel. With an international membership of more than 45,000 in-house lawyers at more than 10,000 organizations in 85 countries, ACC serves as the "voice of the in-house bar" for corporate lawyers at 98 percent of the Fortune 100 and 51 percent of the Global 1000.

With more than 60 chapter operations around the world, Richardson's top priorities as CEO involve continuing to increase ACC's global footprint and charting the organization through a strategic plan and vision designed to strengthen its position as the global voice for in-house counsel. Members look to ACC to advocate in support of their rights and interests as in-house counsel, as well as to offer the practice resources, education, global legal and regulatory analysis, and networking opportunities needed to advance their professional development.