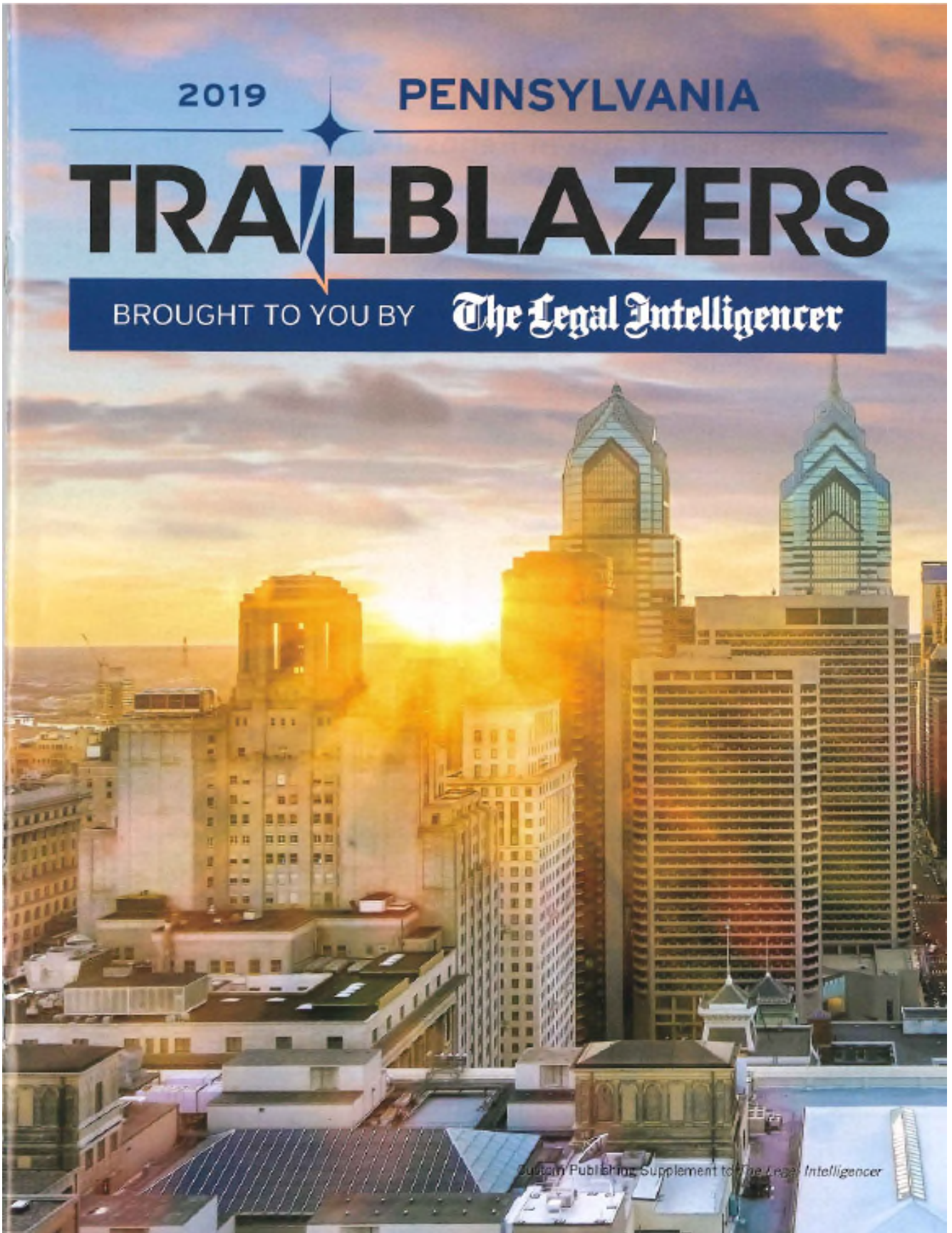


2019

PENNSYLVANIA

# TRAILBLAZERS

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## PATRICIA M. HAMILL

CONRAD O'BRIEN PC



**PIONEER SPIRIT** Patricia Hamill felt somewhat embarrassed when she began defending mostly male college students accused of campus sexual misconduct. “I happen to be very liberal. I’m a feminist. I’m not the typical person you might think would be doing this kind of work.” But over the past six years, Hamill has helped Conrad O’Brien build a national practice in Title IX litigation and disciplinary matters. She wants colleges and universities to take sexual assault reports seriously—and to respect the rights even of the accused. “I don’t come at this from any doctrine other than these processes should be as fair as possible to all participants.”

**TRAILS BLAZED** Hamill spent 30 years as a commercial litigator, mostly defending insurance class actions and securities cases. In 2013, she accepted the case of a Swarthmore College student who had been expelled for sexual misconduct. Her client said the school had made him a scapegoat after the U.S. Department of Investigation began investigating how sexual assault claims were handled on campus. Hamill obtained a favorable settlement for her client, and that case led to another involving Brandeis University and then to matters across the country. “Ever since then, the phone hasn’t stopped ringing.”

**FUTURE EXPLORATIONS** Hamill has given congressional testimony on Title IX and is awaiting new federal regulations that will govern how colleges and universities conduct sexual misconduct investigations. With the #MeToo movement in full swing, “it’s all coming to a head.” She expects the new rules to ensure greater protections for accused students. But to her, “there is no side to sexual assault. It’s important that schools take it seriously.” At the same time, “there’s a perception that when you give rights to one party, you’re taking them away from the other party.”