



Molly F. James

PARTNER

Molly offers thorough guidance on every facet of estate planning and administration by breaking down intricate concepts to ensure clients can make well-informed decisions.



Industries

Family Office Services
Venture Capital & Emerging Businesses

Practices

Private Clients, Trusts & Estates
— Business Succession Planning
— Estate Planning
— Wealth Transfer Strategies
— Probate, Estate Settlement & Trust Administration
— Charitable Planning

Education

Georgetown University, JD, Order of the Coif
Tufts University, BA

Offices

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Molly has over thirty years of experience crafting strategies to help families navigate a variety of financial situations. As a family advisor, Molly continuously monitors and updates clients' estate plans as their circumstances evolve. Her wide range of clientele includes business owners, professionals, executives, venture capitalists, real estate investors, and multigenerational families.

Molly approaches her work with empathy as she guides clients through the estate administration process during challenging times. She helps individuals manage the logistics when a family member passes away and an estate plan is activated.

Beyond wills, revocable trusts, powers of attorney, and advance medical directives, she prepares a variety of specialized documents, including dynasty trusts (generation-skipping trusts, or GSTs), premarital agreements, grantor-retained annuity trusts (GRATs), spousal lifetime access trusts (SLATs), and more. She creates structures for asset protection against taxes, creditors, divorcing spouses, or even the beneficiaries themselves. Additionally, she addresses US estate planning for clients with ties to foreign jurisdictions.

Client Work

- Drafted and oversaw clients' estate plans, which include trusts, intrafamily loans, and closely held business interests, providing clients with a detailed and regularly updated overview of their estate plans.
- Developed and implemented strategies to transition closely held businesses valued at over \$100 million into family trusts over time, effectively minimizing estate tax exposure.
- Drafted grantor retained annuity trusts for an executive's publicly traded company stock and obtained necessary securities advice for the client.
- Partnered with venture capitalists to transfer carried interests into trusts for the benefit of family members.
- Structured the sale of private interests to grantor trusts in exchange for intrafamily loans.
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- Efficiently drafted private foundations and charitable lead annuity trusts for clients to ensure year-end income tax benefits.
- Prepared and filed a private letter ruling request related to a client’s S corporation status.
- Developed estate plans for US citizens living abroad and coordinated US estate planning aspects for international clients.
- Administered estates to provide tax, trust, and probate assistance, promoting family peace.

Publications, Presentations & Recognitions

Recognitions

- *Best Lawyers in America*®: Trusts and Estates (2024-2026)
- *Top Financial Adviser*: Washingtonian Magazine (2024-2025)
- *Legal Elite for Taxes/Estates/Trusts Law*, Virginia Business (2005-2007, 2012, 2017)
- *Top Financial Professional in Estate Planning*, Northern Virginia Magazine (2012-2014)

Presentations

- “Estate, Health and Retirement Planning Through the Ages,” Hogan Lovells LLP, Washington, D.C., (Mar. 8, 2018).
- “Family-Centered Estate Planning,” Vinson & Elkins LLP, Washington, D.C., (Sept. 14, 2015).
- “Estate Tax Law Changes and General Trust Planning,” Wells Fargo, McLean, VA, (Sept. 17, 2014).
- “Estate Tax Strategies and Business Succession Planning,” Troutman Sanders LLP, Richmond, VA, (Apr. 22, 2014).
- “Decanting and Modifying Trusts in Virginia,” BB&T, Vienna, VA, (Jun. 4, 2012).

Professional Activities

Pro Bono Work

- Legal counsel, College Bound Inc., Washington, D.C.
- Legal counsel, Jane Goodall Institute, Vienna, VA.

Life Beyond the Law

Molly is a big supporter of College Bound, Inc., a DC non-Profit that tutors and mentors DC students in 8th -12th grade and gives them college scholarships and ongoing support.

Bar Admissions

[District of Columbia](#)
[Massachusetts](#)
[Maryland](#)
[Virginia](#)