



### The Legacy of Alan Mills

Upon his retirement, we reflect on his 40-year legal career that has changed the firm and the legal field for good.

#### SPOTLIGHTS

## Alan Mills Leaves Legacy At Firm Where Legal Career Began

November 3, 2023 | [Indianapolis](#)

Had he not become a successful lawyer at a leading national law firm, Barnes & Thornburg partner Alan Mills could have been confronted with a difficult career choice.

Very much a music man after his college years, Alan could have seen himself perfecting his craft as a soulful singer. Or maybe, he thought, he would be an astronaut because of his fascination with space and air travel as the son of a U.S. Air Force veteran.

“It would have been a toss-up,” said Alan, who is retiring at the end of 2023 after spending his entire 40-year legal career at Barnes & Thornburg.

Thankfully, he never had to face that decision because of a legal career that really took off like a rocket. Now, as the sun sets on his time at the firm, Alan is finally looking back at the ride of his life and how he helped chart a course for the other lawyers who have followed him and a firm that is growing more diverse by the day.

“I’m happy to be able to exit this stage of my life and leave behind a material practice to worthy lawyers,” Alan said. “For me, the first legacy that appeals to me is the people. I came here to open the door wider so more people of color would have opportunity. It was incredibly important for me to be an advocate for others coming behind me.”

Alan joined the firm in 1982 and became partner in 1990, the first Black lawyer to join Barnes & Thornburg, the first to make partner at the firm, and the first to do so in Indiana.

Dawn Rosemond appreciates this legacy more than most. She started at

#### RELATED PEOPLE



**Alan K. Mills**  
Of Counsel (Retired)

P 317-231-7239  
[alan.mills@btlaw.com](mailto:alan.mills@btlaw.com)



**Dawn R. Rosemond**  
Firm Diversity Partner  
Fort Wayne

P 260-425-4650  
F 260-424-8316  
[dawn.rosemond@btlaw.com](mailto:dawn.rosemond@btlaw.com)

the firm as an associate in 1996. She then rose to partner and currently is the firm's first diversity partner, a role she took on in 2016.

"When I met Alan for the first time, we were in different practices and offices, but he was intentional about helping me develop business and champion other people," she said. "In fact, I can attribute my largest client relationship to Alan. He bet on me, leveraging his power on my behalf internally and externally."

## **The Road to a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commitment**

Their work together didn't end there. Alan recalls that roughly 18 years ago, he and Dawn were in a small group of the only Black partners in the firm at the time, who conducted a survey of Black lawyers and employees at the firm.

The group quickly realized that there was a need to make the firm a more equitable place. They started by sending a memorandum to firm management to identify ways the firm could improve. Both agreed that it was the impetus that really began to change the environment within the firm.

Barnes & Thornburg's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) today stems from the firm's long-standing core values. As Dawn has said, plainly, the business of DEI is the business of the firm.

"As the first executive-level Firm Diversity Partner, I have had a front-row seat to the firm's evolution on the DEI front," Dawn said. "When I consider all that has contributed to our continual journey toward better, I can honestly say that all roads lead to Alan Mills."

Barnes & Thornburg partner Angela B. Freeman agreed. Over the last decade, Angela said she has personally and profoundly benefited from Alan's wise counsel and has witnessed his sustained investment in the promotion of diversity inside and outside of the firm.

"For me personally, Alan was instrumental in helping me work toward becoming a productive Barnes & Thornburg partner with a sustained book of business," she said. "It didn't happen overnight. Instead, Alan helped me strategically navigate all the challenges and opportunities not only with an encouraging voice, but also by providing constructive and real feedback on ways I could improve."

Members of the legal profession outside of Barnes & Thornburg have taken notice of Alan's commitment to diversity.

Nicole Y. Lamb-Hale, vice president, chief legal officer and corporate secretary at Cummins Inc., first met Alan when he was a young partner in the firm. What intrigued her about that meeting was Alan was one of the few law firm partners to attend a regional recruiting fair seeking to identify potential diverse associate and summer associate candidates.

"His presence at that event said to me that he deeply valued the need to recruit diverse lawyers to his firm," Nicole said.

Fast forward many years later, Nicole found herself moving to Indiana in 2021 to take on her Cummins role. Alan reached out to ask how he could help her and her family get settled in a new city.

"During my brief time here in Indiana, I have seen how Alan has helped

facilitate our work and community involvement with Barnes & Thornburg,” she said. “He and other firm leaders have shown through action the importance of diversity, including recruitment and retention of diverse attorneys and ensuring that these lawyers handle significant legal matters on behalf of Cummins.

“As a global company, Cummins is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion, and we expect the law firms with whom we work to have the same commitment in their workplaces and beyond. Witnessing Alan driving change in our profession from the time I met him several years ago to now in his role as a trusted advocate is inspirational.”

Others have taken notice of Alan’s impact on people inside and outside of the firm. He most recently was named a recipient of The Indiana Lawyer’s inaugural Diversity in Law Award.

It’s just the latest memory Alan will be able to take with him when he walks out one last time from under the familiar Barnes & Thornburg awning on South Meridian Street. Better catch him while you can. He’ll be headed off on his next adventure. Maybe it’s another flight or a soulful serenade.