

MNAPABA Highlights

Monthly Member Spotlight | May 2023

Each month, we endeavor to highlight our members. This is part of an ongoing effort to help MNAPABA members get to know one another. Read below about...

Sheila Niaz

Judicial Law Clerk, U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota (Judge Wilhelmina Wright)



Tell us a bit about yourself.

Hello! My name is Sheila Niaz, and I am an American-born Afghan who was raised in Minnesota. Currently, I am clerking for Judge Wilhelmina Wright at the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. Prior to this, I worked as a patent attorney at a biglaw firm.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

As a federal law clerk with experience as a patent attorney, what I enjoy most about my work is the unique opportunity it provides to view the justice system at work and gain a deeper understanding of different areas of the law. I particularly enjoy sitting in court during hearings and trials, as it allows me to witness legal arguments unfold in real time

and observe how justice is administered from the perspective of the bench. Additionally, working on patent cases is especially fulfilling because of the complexity of the issues involved and the chance to see firsthand how these cases are litigated in court. Overall, I feel incredibly fortunate to work in a role that allows me to continually learn and grow as a legal professional, while also being able to make a positive impact on the justice system.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

In my free time, I enjoy reading, painting, baking, and running. I have completed nine marathons, and I am currently training to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

How did you get involved with MNAPABA, what did MNAPABA look like before, and why did you stay involved?

I was initially drawn to MNAPABA through the recommendation of my mentor, who spoke highly of the organization's strong sense of collegiality and support. After attending a few events and getting to know some of the members, I found that this was absolutely true. The events are always engaging and well-organized, leaving me feeling energized and inspired. MNAPABA is one of the most inclusive and vibrant legal organizations I have ever been a part of. The members genuinely want to help each other succeed and create a supportive community. This sense of camaraderie and support is what has kept me involved with MNAPABA, and I plan to continue my involvement in the future. It's rare to find a group of professionals who are so dedicated to lifting each other up and creating a welcoming environment, and I feel fortunate to be a part of it.

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