

DAILY REPORT

ON THE

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RISING LEGAL STARS UNDER 40



**40 GEORGIA
LEGAL RISING
STARS TO WATCH**

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JOHN DISNEY

ALISON A. GROUNDS | 38

Partner, Troutman Sanders, and managing director of eMerge, the firm's e-discovery and data management practice group
Loyola University, history and advertising University of North Carolina School of Law, 2001

TO SAY ALISON A. GROUNDS veered from her Louisiana family's long line of physical education teachers is a bit of an understatement.

Not only does Grounds live hundreds of miles away in Atlanta, but she's widely considered ahead of the pack here in e-discovery. Grounds, a Troutman Sanders partner, heads eMerge, a wholly owned subsidiary that manages the firm's electronic discovery and litigation management completely in-house.

"It's not something I can explain to my mom but it's something of great value to my clients," Grounds says.

As head of eMerge, Grounds said she leads a core staff of 25 lawyers and computer technology specialists and as many as 100 additional attorneys who handle document reviews. The group advises clients on how to develop effective ways to manage, preserve, compile, review and produce electronic records for litigation as well as governmental and regulatory investigations.

Since its launch in June 2012, eMerge has served 280 firm clients in more than 300 matters, according to William Withrow, who chairs the business litigation department at Troutman Sanders and who nominated Grounds for On the Rise.

They include individual clients who have been taken to court by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. for bank failures. In two separate cases Grounds persuaded judges to adopt her version of discovery protocols. That stopped the FDIC from unloading huge piles of data


from failed banks on individual defendants, cutting the review costs for two clients by hundreds of thousands of dollars, possibly more.

"She [Grounds] has not only developed the practice, but she's also well on the way to garnering national recognition in this area," says Withrow. "It's just a matter of time before the news cycle catches up."

Grounds comes from the tiny town of Gonzales, near Baton Rouge, La., and still has family there. Her mother runs a gymnastics studio and a child care facility and her father is a retired Shell pipeline employee, Grounds says.

"He's a supportive guy. He tells me to make sure I take good vacations," Grounds says.

Grounds appears too busy to take a long one. Aside from her work as the firm's e-discovery leader, she played a key role in drafting House Bill 643, which would amend Georgia's Civil Practice Act to recognize electronic discovery. The bill is slated to be taken up by the 2014 General Assembly.

"She gets the litigation side and she gets the technology side and they're not that many people that get the grasp of both of them," says Troutman Sanders managing partner Stephen Lewis. "She's done a remarkable job." 

—Ben Smith

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