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Troutman eMerge and Rising Star Mary Marshall Easley Take Top Honors, With Troutman Pepper Locke Talent Earning Multiple Nods at 2026 Southeastern Legal Awards

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ATLANTA – Troutman Pepper Locke’s eDiscovery, AI, and Data Government practice, [Troutman eMerge](#), clinched the Best Legal Innovation award, and associate [Mary Marshall Easley](#) was named an “On the Rise in North Carolina” winner at the [2026 Southeastern Legal Awards](#), presented by the *Daily Report* and *Law.com*.

Rounding out the firm’s strong showing, Troutman Pepper Locke attorneys [David Dove](#), [David Ghegan](#), and [Leila Harrison](#) were named Finalists in the Best Mentors, Most Effective Deal-Makers, and Most Promising Newcomer categories, respectively.

Together, these recognitions underscore Troutman Pepper Locke’s leadership in driving legal innovation and in attracting, developing, and nurturing top legal talent across the Southeast and nationwide.

Winners

Best Legal Innovation – Troutman eMerge

Troutman eMerge, the firm’s nationally ranked and award-winning subsidiary comprised of practicing attorneys and certified technologists, received the Best Legal Innovation award. Troutman eMerge’s dedicated Custom Solutions team develops innovative AI tools that address clients’ data-related challenges while enhancing the quality, efficiency, and value of the firm’s legal services.

By leveraging attorney-directed AI to more quickly surface the key facts clients need to support their claims and defenses, Troutman eMerge helps clients achieve superior legal outcomes without compromising accuracy, security, or defensibility. The Best Legal Innovation recognition highlights Troutman Pepper Locke’s strategic investment in technology, its commitment to responsible, attorney-led AI, and its reputation as a market leader in innovative legal service delivery.

“Receiving the Best Legal Innovation award affirms Troutman Pepper Locke’s early and consistent investment in responsible, attorney-directed AI,” said [Alison Grounds](#), founder and managing partner of Troutman eMerge.

“From bespoke eMerge AI tools in Relativity to advanced custom-built case management solutions like MatterWise, eMerge provides a powerful, integrated ecosystem to surface critical facts efficiently, manage complexity with confidence, and concentrate on the strategic judgment our clients rely on.”

On the Rise in North Carolina – Mary Marshall Easley

Easley, an associate in the firm’s Charlotte and Raleigh offices, was recognized with the On the Rise in North Carolina award for her community-focused approach to commercial real estate practice. She represents real estate funds, real estate investment trusts, developers, landlords, and tenants in transactions across the United States and involving all asset classes.

The On the Rise award honors attorneys under 40 who are innovators in their fields, creators of distinctive practice niches, proven business generators, effective leaders, and dedicated contributors to both charitable and professional community service. Easley’s recognition reflects both her sophisticated national practice and her deep engagement in the communities where she lives and works.

Finalists

Best Mentors – David Dove

Dove, partner in the firm’s Atlanta office and head of the firm’s Regulatory and Economic Investment Practice, was recognized for his leadership and long-standing commitment to mentoring and advancing colleagues.

Most Effective Deal-Makers – David Ghegan

Ghegan, partner in the firm’s Atlanta office, was shortlisted for his work advising public and private companies on complex securities and corporate finance transactions, as well as mergers and acquisitions, and for earning repeat business through successful deal execution.

Most Promising Newcomer – Leila Harrison

Harrison, associate in the firm’s Atlanta office, was nominated for her environmental regulatory compliance and due diligence work, as well as her growing litigation experience, which together demonstrate exceptional promise early in her career.

Troutman eMerge

[Troutman eMerge](#) offers clients integrated legal, technology, and AI-enhanced services to address complex data-driven problems in litigation, transactional and compliance matters, government investigations, and information governance initiatives. eMerge’s lawyers have received numerous accolades from leading industry authorities, including *Chambers USA* and *Legal 500*. For more information, visit troutmanemerge.com.

Troutman Pepper Locke

Troutman Pepper Locke helps clients solve complex legal challenges and achieve their business goals in an ever-changing global economy. With more than 1,600 attorneys in 30+ offices, the firm serves clients in all major industry sectors, with particular depth in energy, financial services, health care and life sciences, insurance and reinsurance, private equity, and real estate. Learn more at troutman.com.