

AMERICAN BANKER®

Most Influential Women in Fintech

Influence in the fintech sector takes many forms. There are entrepreneurs who work long hours to build businesses, create jobs and develop innovative products that help people. There are the venture capitalists who take a chance on these founders with fresh ideas and give them the funding to keep going. There are industry organizers who get everyone on the same page on important matters such as industry self-regulation. And there are consultants and lawyers who help the industry get past all the obstacles that arise.

American Banker's inaugural Most Influential Women in Fintech honors women in all these categories. Why just women? Because the numbers are still dismal for women in fintech. Female-founded startups raised 1.9% of all venture capital funds in 2022, a drop from 2021, according to Pitchbook. Industry observers estimate that female-led startups in the fintech sector received about half of that. By recognizing the outstanding female leaders, we aim to highlight the contributions they are making alongside their male colleagues and allies.

Judie Rinearson is one of the women helping to bring new financial technology to life and move the industry forward in its efforts to help consumers, businesses and financial institutions innovate and bring about better financial products and experiences.

Judie Rinearson is a veteran financial services attorney who wears many hats at the global law firm K&L Gates.

She is a senior partner leading the payments, banking regulation and consumer financial services practice; co-chair of the financial technology industry team and co-chair of the digital assets, blockchain technology and cryptocurrency group.

Rinearson and her team assist fintech clients and their partner banks in navigating the web of U.S. and international laws that impact their products and services. Because she represents clients offering innovative products that do not fit easily into existing regulatory frameworks, Rinearson is known for her advocacy on behalf of clients as they work with regulators and government agencies.

Earlier in her career, Rinearson worked for American Express as counsel for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. She was based in Sydney during that period. Rinearson then was named counsel for the global American Express Travelers Cheques and Prepaid Services Group, where she led the issuance of the first American Express gift card and open-loop prepaid incentive card.

She later moved into private practice at Bryan Cave, and prior to her current firm, also served as chief regulatory counsel for the U.S. Network Branded Prepaid Card Association.



Judie Rinearson

**Partner and practice group coordinator for payments,
banking regulation and consumer financial services
K&L Gates**

Rinearson said her experience as an in-house lawyer at American Express and representing fintechs at outside law firms instilled in her the importance of educating and working with regulators and legislators as they develop the rules that govern emerging fintech products and services. She has served on many trade association boards and has worked to ensure that proposed regulations adequately address the risks perceived by government agencies without overly stifling consumer choice, creativity and innovation.

Asked what she believes are the biggest challenges facing fintechs in 2023, Rinearson cited cybercrime and fraud.

“These two villains are anathema to a payments/financial services industry relying increasingly on online and remote relationships and transactions,” she said. “And with global uncertainties, ... the sheer volume of cybercrime and fraud seems to be growing faster and faster every day. Keeping up with the criminals and their technology is incredibly difficult and requires significant resources.” — *Jim Dobbs*