





# Answering America's Call

*Alumni serve in the new  
administration's top posts*

BY JAMIE L. FREEDMAN

Washington's corridors of power are trimmed with an unmistakable trace of Colonial buff and blue. From the State Department to the Pentagon and White House, GW alumni, students, and faculty members are answering the nation's call to serve.

As the Obama administration finishes its first year in office, *GW Magazine* checked in with seven high-ranking alumni appointees.

## Helping Veterans

Veterans have a friend in Washington following the April appointment of Tammy Duckworth, MA '92, as assistant secretary of public and intergovernmental affairs for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

A decorated war hero, Ms. Duckworth was co-piloting a Black Hawk helicopter during a combat mission north of Baghdad on Nov. 12, 2004, when a rocket-propelled grenade fired by Iraqi insurgents struck the cockpit of her aircraft. Severely injured, she attempted to pilot the helicopter until she passed out from blood loss. As a result of the attack, Ms. Duckworth lost both legs and partial use of one arm. She spent the next 13 months recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

"One of my visitors during that period was then-Sen. Barack Obama, who encouraged me to run for the U.S. House of Representatives in Illinois in 2006," Ms. Duckworth says.

She staged a spirited congressional campaign, winning the primary but losing the general election by less than 2 percent of the vote. Ms. Duckworth was subsequently appointed director of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, where she implemented a variety of programs.

Since arriving in Washington, Ms. Duckworth has been reaching out to veterans across the country. "The greatest honor of my life has and always will be the privilege of

servicing in uniform next to the finest people I have ever known. I've been given a second chance at life and am thrilled to give something back to the guys and gals who helped me survive."

The public face of the VA, Ms. Duckworth directs media and public affairs operations and oversees programs relating to intergovernmental relations, homeless veterans, and consumer affairs. One recent project was the August launch of the new GI Bill. "I'm passionate about it

*Tammy Duckworth, MA '92, assistant secretary of public and intergovernmental affairs for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*

because I feel strongly that the original GI Bill helped build this country by educating a generation of leaders and creating the middle class," Ms. Duckworth says. "The new GI Bill will enable post-9/11 veterans to get a top-notch education, make their voices heard, and become the leaders of tomorrow."

Ms. Duckworth returned to her alma mater this spring to announce GW's participation in the GI Bill's Yellow Ribbon Program—a voluntary agreement to waive up to half of veterans' tuition at private universities, matched dollar for dollar by the VA. "GW was the first school in the Washington, D.C., region to sign an agreement to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program," says Ms. Duckworth, who earned her master's degree in international affairs from the Elliott School.

Another project close to Ms. Duckworth's heart is the VA's mental-health initiative. "We need to get the message out to veterans that there is no stigma attached to seeking mental-health care," she says. "The VA has expertise in dealing with post-traumatic stress syndrome and brain injuries, and it is important that veterans come in and get the care they need and deserve to lead full and productive lives."

Homeless veterans are also a pressing issue on Ms. Duckworth's agenda. "VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has set a goal of ending homelessness among veterans in five years," she says.

Female veterans are an increasing focus for the VA, she adds. "By the end of next year, women will make up close to 15 percent of the VA population," says Ms. Duckworth, who signed on to work as an Army pilot in 1992 because "it was the only combat position open to women" at the time. "We now have a women's health coordinator at every VA hospital. Soon, we're going to have combat veterans giving birth. That's amazing!"

Despite her work schedule, Ms. Duckworth makes time to achieve personal goals. She completed the last two Chicago Marathons and competed as a cyclist in this year's Army 10 Miler in Washington as part of the Missing Parts in Action team, composed of amputees. She is also flying again for leisure, piloting a fixed-wing aircraft.

Ms. Duckworth alternates between use of two prosthetic legs and a wheelchair. She is not shy about her prostheses, one of which is decorated like the American flag and the other in a pattern of camouflage.

"I can never recover the body I had before I was injured, but I am also able to do some things now that I never would have thought of doing before, like competing in marathons," she says.

Ms. Duckworth brings that same philosophy to her work at the VA. "We're working hard to change and transform old bureaucracies into new ways of thinking."

## Taking Charge at the SEC

Amid the worst global financial crisis since the Great Depression, Mary L. Schapiro, JD '80, was appointed chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. A proven leader with the skills and experience to meet the daunting challenges of these tough economic times, Ms. Schapiro is the first woman to chair



RICK REINHARD



*Mary Schapiro, JD '80, chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission*

the commission. She returns to the agency after a 15-year hiatus, previously serving as a commissioner from 1988 to 1994 under Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.

No stranger to the hot seat, Ms. Schapiro chaired the Commodity Futures Trading Commission in the mid-1990s following the collapse of Barings Bank and oversaw the National Association of Security Dealers' 2005 probe into extensive gift giving on Wall Street. During Ms. Schapiro's

11-year tenure with NASD, culminating in her appointment as chair and CEO, she was widely praised for strengthening the agency's regulatory enforcement and for spearheading the creation of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. She served as FINRA's CEO until taking over the reins of the SEC in January.

Embattled investors welcomed the appointment of Ms. Schapiro as chair of the SEC, which has come under intense fire in recent months as a result of the crisis on Wall Street. "The crisis facing our capital markets requires aggressive and timely action to restore investor trust and confidence," says Ms. Schapiro, an ardent proponent of investor protection. "Trillions of dollars of wealth have been lost. Our economy is in recession. And investor confidence has been badly shaken. It is precisely during times like these that we need the SEC as the 'investor's advocate.'"

Ms. Schapiro, who oversees a team of five presidentially appointed commissioners as well as some 3,500 staff members, says she was tapped as SEC chairman at a critical time. "The challenges we face are historic, but they're not insurmountable. It will take determination, hard work, toughness, and above all, an unrelenting will to stand up for investors and ensure that they are protected," she says.

A career in regulation was nowhere on Ms. Schapiro's radar screen when she entered GW Law. She had majored in anthropology and planned to use a legal education to work with

## HONORED FOR SERVICE

At GW's "Celebration of Service" dinner Oct. 15, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, MBA '71, presented the inaugural Colin Powell Public Service Award to Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary Tammy Duckworth, MA '92, for her lifetime of service.

"I am honored to have two of GW's most prestigious alumni, Gen. Powell and Assistant Secretary Duckworth, here for this special award and this exciting announcement," GW President Steven Knapp said. "Gen. Powell has been a true role model for service, and it is hard to think of a more suitable candidate to receive the first Colin Powell Public Service Award than Assistant Secretary Duckworth. She has truly embodied the spirit of service and sacrifice the award was created to recognize."

Also at the event, President Knapp announced the launch of the Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service, which will support public service activities across the University. The celebration was held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and emceed by journalist Cokie Roberts and her husband, Steven Roberts, a professor at GW's School of Media and Public Affairs.



Native American groups. “But, in my third year of law school, we read about the Hunt brothers’ attempt to manipulate the silver market for personal gain, causing the price of silver to skyrocket,” she says. “The anthropologist in me was fascinated by the idea that these arrogant people thought they were bigger than the market.” Ms. Schapiro was hooked. After graduation, she landed her first job in financial services regulation.

Since assuming the chairmanship of the SEC in January, Ms. Schapiro has acted swiftly to begin revitalizing the 75-year-old agency. “The American people want and expect us to update the regulatory system that has failed them—and to prevent the kinds of abuses that have contributed to the economic crisis we now face,” she says. “Public service is all-consuming, but there are enormous rewards. The SEC serves American investors and, at the end of the day, the decisions we make are those in the interest of investors and market integrity,” she says, “and that’s an enormous reward.”

## Leading Nuclear Negotiations

It’s been a whirlwind year for Rose Gottemoeller, MA ’81. Since her April appointment as assistant secretary of state for verification, compliance, and implementation, the nuclear arms control policy expert has been crisscrossing the Atlantic negotiating arms control treaties and working to curb the spread of nuclear weapons.



*Rose Gottemoeller, MA '81,  
assistant secretary of state  
for verification, compliance,  
and implementation*

RIK REINHARD

GW Magazine caught up with Ms. Gottemoeller between trips to Geneva, where she was renegotiating the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russians. “From my very earliest days in office, Secretary Clinton has emphasized that one of our highest priority national policy issues is negotiating a follow-on to the START treaty, which goes out of force in December,” she says. “Once we’ve finished negotiating a follow-on to the START treaty, we’ll be looking to negotiate deeper reductions with the Russians and eventually bring the French, the Chinese, and the U.K. to the table.”

Regarded as an intelligent negotiator with a deep knowledge of the issues, Ms. Gottemoeller has spent the bulk of her career addressing nuclear nonproliferation. Her résumé includes high-ranking positions at the U.S. Department of Energy; at prestigious foreign policy think tanks in Washington and London; and on the White House National Security Council during the Clinton administration, where she directed Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia affairs. For the past decade, she has been with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where she worked on U.S.-Russian relations and nuclear security and stability. She served as director of the Carnegie Moscow Center from 2006 to 2008.

Fluent in Russian, Ms. Gottemoeller says she came up through the professional ranks as a journeyman. “I began my career in the late 1970s as a research assistant at RAND for their senior Soviet military expert at the time—Col. Thomas Wolf, who was also an adjunct professor at GW,” she reflects. Attending GW classes at night while working full time at RAND, she appreciated the University’s flexibility and interdisciplinary approach. “I was interested in science and technology policy but also wanted to spend time working on Soviet studies, and GW made it possible to do both, which served my career very well,” she says. “GW is a great launchpad for careers in Washington. I made a lot of great professional contacts there and was able to quickly apply the practical policymaking techniques we learned in the classroom to my work at RAND and, eventually, the federal government.”

One of the greatest rewards of working in public service is “helping to accomplish very strong policy outcomes,” Ms. Gottemoeller says. “During the Clinton administration, I worked on negotiating agreements to remove nuclear weapons from the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Our policies were successful in denuclearizing those countries, which was enormously satisfying, both personally and professionally.”

The assistant secretary is now striving to create results for the Obama administration. “We have a clear cut, substantive agenda,” she concludes. “I’m greatly honored to be in this position and feel like anything we can do to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world is a terrific reward in its own right.”

## Minding the Defense Budget

These are critical times at the Department of Defense as the United States fights two lengthy wars and the Pentagon’s budget comes under closer scrutiny. Many applauded the appointment of



*Robert Hale, MBA '76, under secretary of defense (comptroller) and chief financial officer of the DOD*

RICK BEINHARD

Robert Hale, MBA '76, as under secretary of defense (comptroller) and chief financial officer.

A leader in the field for more than three decades, Mr. Hale served as assistant secretary of the Air Force (financial management and comptroller) from 1994 to 2001, overseeing annual budgets of more than \$70 billion and spearheading the creation of the first certification program for defense financial managers. Earlier in his career, he directed the national security division of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office for 12 years. At the time of his nomination, Mr. Hale served as executive director of the American Society of Military Comptrollers, the professional association of defense financial managers.

As under secretary of defense, he serves as principal adviser to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates on all budgetary and fiscal matters, including the development and execution of the department's annual budget. Mr. Hale's portfolio also includes overseeing the DOD's financial policy, financial management systems, and business modernization efforts. "The DOD is one of the world's biggest and most complex organizations, and it's a particularly difficult period here now with two wars going on," he says. "My job is to support the secretary of defense in every way I can."

Referring to the fiscal 2010 defense budget as a "reform budget," Mr. Hale says the DOD is shifting priorities to focus more on unconventional warfare, while maintaining a balance of conventional capability. "We're fighting unconventional wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has led to a variety of changes,

such as a greater focus on special operations forces and more emphasis on weapons systems designed to fight today's irregular wars," he says. "We are intent on taking care of our troops and their families, and that includes everything from providing adequate pay raises, to supporting recruitment and retention, to providing decent health benefits."

Mr. Hale's knowledge and experience have led some to call him "a comptroller's comptroller." He admits that serving as comptroller of the Pentagon was not part of his original career plan. "I don't think anyone is born thinking they want to be a defense budget analyst," says the under secretary, who grew up on a fruit farm in northern California.

At GW, Mr. Hale took MBA courses at night while working full time at the Congressional Budget Office, with the intention of pursuing a career in the private sector. "At that point in my career, I wasn't sure if government was the long-term answer, but it turned out to be the right thing for me."

The best part of the job is what he calls "driving home satisfaction." "Often when I'm driving home at night after a long day at the office, I feel good that I've been able to do something to help the men and women who are out there putting their lives on the line trying to defend our freedom," he explains. "I enjoy serving a cause bigger than myself."

## The First Lady's Chief of Staff

First lady Michelle Obama turned to a "trusted adviser, long-time mentor, and friend" in June when she appointed Susan Sher, BA '70, chief of staff.

The two attorneys first met in 1991, when Ms. Sher was the first assistant corporation counsel for the city of Chicago. "I received a résumé from Michelle Robinson, who was then engaged to President Obama and working at Sidley Austin,



*Susan Sher, BA '70, the first lady's chief of staff*

OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY SAMANTHA APLETON



*Wilma Liebman, JD '74, chairman of the National Labor Relations Board*

a large corporate law firm in Chicago,” she says. “She was interested in making the switch from private practice to public service, as I had done earlier in my career after 11 years at Mayer Brown.” Ms. Sher passed her résumé along to co-worker Valerie Jarrett (now a senior adviser to President Obama), the deputy chief of staff in Mayor Richard M. Daley’s office, who hired her. “The rest, of course, is history,” she says.

Ms. Sher hired the First Lady again a decade later, while serving as vice president for legal and governmental affairs and general counsel of the University of Chicago Medical Center. “The CEO asked me if I would add community and government affairs to my portfolio. I said, ‘Sure, but the first thing we have to do is hire Michelle Obama,’” she reflects. “We’ve worked very closely together ever since.”

During her 11-year tenure at the University of Chicago Medical Center and her eight-year tenure in Mayor Daley’s office, Ms. Sher cultivated an array of skills that are serving her well at the White House. “I was the first woman to serve as Mayor Daley’s corporation counsel [chief lawyer], where I supervised a staff of 203 attorneys presiding over a wide range of legal issues facing the city,” she says.

At the White House since January, Ms. Sher initially joined the administration as associate counsel to the president, serving as legal counsel in the East and West Wing, a member of the health care reform task force, and a liaison to the Jewish

community. “My responsibilities included providing legal advice to the First Lady, which helped make for a pretty seamless transition when she asked me to become her chief of staff in June,” she says.

Ms. Sher now oversees a team of 24 staffers working around the clock on policy, scheduling, communications, and event planning. “I am here to be as useful as I can in helping the first lady pursue her agenda,” she says. “She has a wonderful way of connecting with people and is deeply committed to making a difference.”

Ms. Sher says her GW experiences helped influence her to become a lawyer and public servant. “I was an art history major and took a great course in constitutional law with Professor Charles Morgan that I found just fascinating,” she reflects. “It was instrumental to my decision to pursue a law degree.”

She never dreamed that her career would take her to the White House. “It’s just an amazing set of circumstances,” she says.

## Taking the Helm of the NLRB

Wilma Liebman, JD ’74, is fighting for America’s workers as chairman of the National Labor Relations Board. First appointed to the independent federal agency in 1997 by Bill Clinton and twice reappointed by George W. Bush, Ms. Liebman brings decades of experience to the job.

As a newly minted GW Law graduate in 1974, she launched her career as an NLRB staff attorney in Washington and Oakland, Calif. She subsequently served as legal counsel for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters for nine years and the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen for three years. Prior to her appointment by President Clinton to the NLRB, Ms. Liebman served as deputy director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

“The NLRB matters to working people, to business, to our economy, and to society as a whole. The statute we administer is the foundation of America’s commitment to human rights recognized around the world,” says Ms. Liebman, whose term expires on Aug. 27, 2011.

Ms. Liebman takes the helm of the NLRB at a challenging time. For more than a year prior to her appointment as chairman, the five-member agency has operated with just two members—Ms. Liebman and Republican board member Peter Schaumber—because of political squabbles on Capitol Hill. Three other board member positions were vacant as of press time.

The chairman attributes the NLRB’s waning caseload to the decline in unionization and in the number of collective bargaining disputes and strikes, which often generate litigation. “In 1946, there were close to 6,000 strikes, and last year, there were less than 200,” she says. “Union membership is at a historic low point. Recent years have also seen a growing disenchantment with the board itself, which has contributed to the dramatically declining caseload.”

At the same time, there are optimistic signs on the horizon. “The National Labor Relations Act was passed in

1935, when our country was still in the depths of the Great Depression, and helped our nation return to prosperity,” Ms. Liebman says. “While the economy and workplace have greatly changed since then, these issues have now returned front and center, as people again look to restore the middle class. It is once again clear that labor law is fundamental to democracy and fundamental to our economy.”

As she contemplates the years ahead, Ms. Liebman says she will do her utmost to restore “hope and confidence in the law” through “reasoned, informed, and timely decision making” at the NLRB. “Today’s labor laws are the product of tremendous struggle, and the board will honor that struggle by enforcing labor law fairly and thoughtfully,” says Ms. Liebman, who hired her GW Law classmate Arlene Fine Klepper, JD ’74, as her chief of staff at the NLRB.

“We’re never again going to have the economy that we had in the 1950s, when people would work for one employer for a lifetime and could pretty much count on retiring with a pension and everything else they needed,” Ms. Liebman concludes. “It’s a scary time, but also a hopeful time, as we work hard to restore some sense of security and dignity to America’s workforce.”

## A Rising Star on Capitol Hill

Sudafi Henry, JD ’02, serves as the vice president’s “eyes and ears” in Congress. Mr. Henry was appointed in January as director of legislative affairs for Vice President Joe Biden, and he splits his time between the Capitol and the White House.

“It’s an extraordinary opportunity to work closely with the vice president, witness the president in action, and make a small contribution to the significant challenges that our administration is confronting,” Mr. Henry says.

Lauded by Vice President Biden as “a rising star on Capitol Hill,” Mr. Henry has served as a key congressional staffer for the past decade, most recently as counsel and senior policy adviser for House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.). Over the years, he has worked closely with and earned the trust of many members of Congress, acquiring strong policy experience and institutional knowledge along the way. “Vice President Biden spent 36 years in the Senate and his relationships there run deep, which makes my job a lot easier,” he says. “He is a sincere person, true to his word, and a phenomenal listener who wants to solve problems across party lines, and it’s my job to make sure that his interests are represented on the Hill.”

A Los Angeles native, Mr. Henry landed his first position on Capitol Hill straight out of high school as an intern in the Senate Sergeant at Arms office. After earning his BA in history from the University of Maryland College Park in 1995, he served as legislative director for former Rep. Major Owens (D-N.Y.) for four years, leaving in 1999 to attend GW Law School, where he says he “received invaluable training” for his career.

Following his graduation from GW Law and two years in private practice, Mr. Henry returned to Capitol Hill as legislative director for Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II (D-Mo.). He joined Mr. Hoyer’s staff in 2005, when Mr. Hoyer was minority whip, and experienced the congressman’s transition to House majority leader in November 2006.

In Mr. Hoyer’s office, he worked closely with members of Congress and committee staff to craft and win passage of critical legislation on trade, telecommunications, the economy, and the financial crisis. One of Mr. Henry’s most memorable experiences was traveling with Mr. Hoyer on a bipartisan trip to Darfur to assess the situation in the war-torn land. “It was a sobering experience that was impossible to prepare for mentally,” Mr. Henry says. “You could see the trauma in women’s and children’s eyes.” He also accompanied Mr. Hoyer to Germany to visit American troops who had been injured in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now on his biggest stage yet, Mr. Henry says he is honored to be playing a role in the Obama administration. Two chief motivating forces for him are his daughters, ages 2 and 6. “I’m blessed to be in a position where maybe I can make a contribution to their future, make their lives better, by passing along a better country and environment,” he says. “I feel like I’m doing right by them and making a positive contribution to the public.” **GW**



Sudafi Henry, JD ’02, director of legislative affairs for Vice President Joe Biden