

Answering the Nation's Call

GW LAW ALUMNI JOIN RANKS OF NEW ADMINISTRATION

The George Washington University Law School enjoyed a front row seat to the action this year as the 2008 presidential race took the world by storm. GW Law alumni, students, and faculty members served in wide-ranging capacities throughout the historic presidential campaign, transition, and inauguration. Many now hold prominent positions in President Barack Obama's administration, while others head up national agencies and commissions.

A case in point is Eric Holder Jr., the nation's new attorney general, who received an honorary doctor of laws degree from GW Law School in 1998 and served as a GW trustee from 1996-97. Holder's installation ceremony was held in March before a capacity crowd at GW's Lisner Auditorium. Other Law School alumni serving in key positions include Mary DeRosa, JD '84, deputy counsel to the president for National Security Affairs and legal adviser to the National Security Council; William A. Gunn, LLM '74, general counsel for the Department of Veterans Affairs; Stephen G. Burns, JD '78, general counsel of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and Kenneth E. Melson, JD '73, acting director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Professor Spencer Overton, a leading election law scholar who was involved in the Obama campaign, was named the principal deputy assistant attorney general for the Office of Legal Policy in the U.S. Department of Justice.

As the Obama administration neared its 100th day in office this spring, *GW Law School Magazine* checked in with three high-profile alumni as they completed the first months of their appointments in the new administration.

Veteran Regulator Heads Up SEC

Amid the worst global financial crisis since the Great Depression, anxious investors applauded President Barack Obama's January appointment of veteran regulator Mary L. Schapiro, JD '80, as 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, Schapiro is the first woman to chair 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, 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 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 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 Schapiro, an ardent proponent of investor protection. "Trillions of dollars



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MARY SCHAPIRO, JD '80, *chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission*



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SUDAFI HENRY, JD '02, director of legislative affairs for Vice President Joe Biden

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.’”

Schapiro, who oversees a team of five presidentially-appointed commissioners as well as some 3,500 staff members, says “the stars aligned perfectly” for her to be tapped as SEC chairman at such a historic moment. “It’s incredibly humbling to be part of this administration, working on issues that are so important to the country,” Schapiro says. “Barack Obama is an incredible visionary, and we are going to work our hearts out here at the SEC to get the job done and restore confidence in our financial system. 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.”

A career in regulation was nowhere on Schapiro’s radar screen when she entered GW Law. “I majored in anthropology in college and thought that I would use my legal education to work with Native American groups,” she shares. “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. The anthropologist in me was fascinated by the idea that these arrogant people thought they were bigger than the market.” Schapiro was hooked and, soon after graduation, landed her first job in financial services regulation.

Schapiro, who attended GW Law on a scholarship, credits the Law School with helping her achieve professional success. “I got a phenomenal education at GW,” she says. “I had wonderful, accomplished professors who challenged me and pushed me and always gave me the time I needed to talk about issues and understand theories. It was a great experience.”

Since assuming the chairmanship of the SEC in January, 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. “I am under no illusion that this will be an easy job. There is a lot of work to be done in the months ahead. I look forward to the challenge of helping the millions of investors who rely on strong markets and a strong economy.”

She adds that she is exceptionally honored to serve as “the face of the SEC” at such a critical time. “It’s an exciting opportunity,” she says. “I like turnaround situations that require a dramatic relook to move forward, and that’s what we’re doing right now as we strive to restore confidence in the SEC.”

Schapiro calls it a “gift” to work in the public interest realm. “I have spent most of my professional life in government public service and enjoy the opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives,” she says. “Our goal across all of public service is the same—to make people’s lives better. Of

course, there are sacrifices you make financially and in terms of your privacy and time. 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, and that’s an enormous reward,” she says.

A Rising Star on Capitol Hill

Not many people can say they go to work every day with a bounce in their step and clicking their heels. It’s the norm for Sudafi Henry, JD ’02, following his January appointment as director of legislative affairs for Vice President Joe Biden.

Lauded by Biden as “a rising star on Capitol Hill,” 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.

“I have to pinch myself every morning,” he says from his office near the Senate chamber, surrounded by 150-year-old frescoes by Italian artist Constantino Brumidi and magnificent chandeliers. “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.”

Henry, who splits his time between the Capitol and the White House, serves as the vice president’s “eyes and ears” in the Congress. “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, 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.

“I am very confident that I would not be where I am today were it not for my GW Law School education,” he says. “I received invaluable training at GW. The professors are really engaged and interested in the development and success of their students, and people at the Law School are very genuine and authentic,” says Henry, who regularly gets together with a group of Law School friends “to break bread and trade stories.”

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

leader in November 2006 after the Democratic Party took back the majority.

In 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. "I can't say enough about working for Mr. Hoyer," he says. "He gave me a lot of great opportunities that prepared me in many ways for the work I'm doing now."

One of Henry's most memorable experiences was traveling with 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," Henry says. "You could see the trauma in women's and children's eyes." He also accompanied Hoyer to Germany to visit American troops who had been injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. "It was moving to meet with them and have the opportunity to thank them for their service and sacrifice," he says.

Now on his biggest stage yet, Henry is honored to be playing a role in the Obama administration. "In many ways, it's surreal to be here, walking through these corridors," he says. "We've accomplished an incredible amount in the first 100 days of the administration, but so much remains to be done."

Two chief motivating forces for Henry 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. You can't beat it. I am very fortunate."

Taking the Helm of the NLRB

It's a tough time for America's workers as unemployment soars and benefits dwindle. On Jan. 20, the labor law community embraced Obama's appointment of Wilma Liebman, JD '74, as chairman of the National Labor Relations Board. First appointed to the independent federal agency in 1997 by Clinton and twice reappointed by George W. Bush, 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 Clinton to the NLRB, Liebman served as deputy director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

"It's a privilege to be able to serve at this historic moment," says Liebman, whose term expires on Aug. 27, 2011. "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."

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—Liebman and republican board member Peter Schaumber, due to political squabbles on Capitol Hill. "We've issued more than 400 decisions since January 2008 in cases where he and I agreed," says Liebman, who was awaiting the appointment of three new board members at press time. "But it's been a very difficult situation."


The chairman also remarked on the NLRB's waning caseload, which she attributes in part 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," 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. I am hopeful that, with a full complement of board members, we will be able to meet the many challenges ahead and restore confidence in the NLRB."

Liebman says that GW Law School prepared her well for her career in labor law. "I had great professors and enjoyed the proximity to the government," she says. In March, Liebman hired her GW Law classmate and longtime friend and practicing attorney Arlene Fine Klepper, JD '74, as her chief of staff at the NLRB. "We went out to lunch shortly after my appointment as chairman, and I mentioned to her that I was looking for someone just like her to be my chief of staff," Liebman says. "It's great to have her on board."

The Law School honored Liebman on April 17 with the Belva Lockwood Award, which is named for GW Law's first female graduate. "I was very touched," she says. "As I said in my remarks, I only wish I had Belva Lockwood's pluck, persistence, and colorful personality."

As she contemplates the years ahead, 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," she says.

"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," 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." 



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