



NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

Michael A. Cardozo, *Corporation Counsel*

Press Release

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**FEDERAL BAR COUNCIL HONORS
CORPORATION COUNSEL MICHAEL A. CARDOZO
WITH PRESTIGIOUS EMORY BUCKNER MEDAL**

**IN AWARD'S KEYNOTE SPEECH,
CARDOZO OFFERS IDEAS ON HOW TO
TO PROVIDE GREATER ATTORNEY TRAINING
AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR LAWYERS**

CARDOZO STRESSES THE NEED FOR BETTER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PRIVATE BAR AND PUBLIC SECTOR IN GIVING JUNIOR ATTORNEYS MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO HONE THEIR LEGAL SKILLS AND EXTOLS THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING MUNICIPAL WORK

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New York, Nov. 23, 2011 – The Federal Bar Council today honored Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo with the prestigious Emory Buckner Medal to acknowledge his longstanding commitment to the legal community and to public service.

"I am truly honored to be receiving such a prestigious and important award," Cardozo noted. "The Federal Bar Council plays a major role in the practice of law in this City, and it's nothing short of humbling to be included in the ranks of recipients for this award."

Emory R. Buckner was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York from 1925 to 1927, and since 1962, the Council has annually awarded the Buckner Medal. Past recipients include Governors Thomas E. Dewey, Nelson A. Rockefeller, and Mario M. Cuomo; Secretary of State Cyrus Vance; Attorney General Richard L. Thornburgh; Senators Jacob K. Javits, James L. Buckley, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Alfonse M. D'Amato and Charles E. Schumer; Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly; and Mayor Edward I. Koch.

"Michael is the longest-serving Corporation Counsel in modern history -- and one of the most accomplished Corporation Counsels in our City's history," noted Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, for whom Cardozo has worked as Corporation Counsel for 10 years. "The Emory Buckner Medal is a wonderful recognition of his talent, dedication and distinguished public service career."

In presenting the Emory Buckner Award, Federal Bar Council President Frank H. Wohl also said, "New York is indeed fortunate to have a Corporation Counsel of the extraordinary stature, skill and dedication of Michael Cardozo." The Award, being given for the 50th time in its history, was presented at the Federal Bar Council's Thanksgiving Luncheon at the Waldorf-Astoria which was attended by over 1,500 members of the bench and bar.

During the award's keynote speech, Cardozo addressed the current state of the legal profession, tackling in particular an issue of emerging importance – the lack of training opportunities and substantive work for

junior attorneys. “Today we are faced with a glut of unemployed lawyers, a lack of training opportunities for many lawyers, and a large number of unhappy members of our profession. At the same time the huge demand for lawyers for the poor and for the government remains unmet. We must work together to solve these problems,” he said.

Expanding on current concerns in the profession, he noted:

- First, the number of unemployed lawyers in this country is very high, and likely to increase, with New York having the largest number of surplus attorneys in the country. (Source: *Wall Street Journal* Blog, June 28, 2011.) And according to one report, only two-thirds of 2010 law school graduates nationwide have been able to obtain legal employment. (Source: *NYT Times* Edit, Aug. 23, 2011.)
- Second, at the same time that lawyer unemployment numbers are increasing, the demand for civil legal services for the poor is skyrocketing. Last year, for example, more than 2.3 million New Yorkers tried to navigate the legal system without an attorney, forced to represent themselves in evictions, foreclosures, deportations and scores of other civil matters. (Source: *WNYC News*, Sept. 30, 2011.)
- Third, because of budget cutbacks, government law have fewer and fewer lawyers. (Source: *Associated Press Article in the Seattle Post Intelligencer or Seattle PI*, Oct. 26, 2011) This is also true at the New York City Law Department, although the office’s caseloads keep rising.
- Fourth, the opportunity for junior lawyers in the private sector, especially those in large firms, to gain hands on training and experience is limited, and steadily declining. (Source: *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 17, 2011.) This is partially a result, as both the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* have recently reported, of clients’ increasing unwillingness to pay for junior associates to staff their matters.
- Fifth, according to the annual *American Lawyer* survey, satisfaction levels among mid-level associates are decreasing. (Source: *The American Lawyer*, September 2011)

As a way of addressing these problems, Cardozo suggested increased cooperation between the private sector, law schools, and government and civil legal service offices, proposing that existing programs in which junior attorneys spend short periods of time in public offices could be expanded upon greatly.

“The potential solutions to the problems vary, and might include making major changes in the law school curriculum that would result in more skills training, or expecting firms to encourage their first year associates to work at a lower salary, but at the firm’s expense, in a government or legal services office, or even requiring employment in civil legal services or government law offices as a prerequisite to obtaining a law license,” he continued. “Any of these solutions, along with what are undoubtedly numerous others, would involve a dialogue and collaboration among all parts of the profession.”

The Corporation Counsel also spoke about his admiration for public service and the legal profession’s need to continue its long history of public service. “My service as Corporation Counsel has brought home to me the rewards of public service. It is important for lawyers to continue this public service tradition that the Emory Medal honors,” Cardozo noted.

Copies of the Corporation Counsel’s speech can be obtained from the Law Department’s Media Office at media@law.nyc.gov or (212) 788-0400, and we’re also available to answer questions.

The New York City Law Department is one of the oldest, largest and most dynamic law offices in the world, ranking among the top largest law offices in New York City and one of the largest public law offices in the country. Tracing its roots back to the 1600’s, the Department has an active caseload of 90,000 matters and transactions in 17 legal divisions. The Corporation Counsel heads the Law Department and acts as legal counsel for the Mayor, elected officials, the City and all its agencies. The Department’s 650 attorneys represent the City on a vast array of civil litigation, legislative and legal issues and in the criminal prosecution of juveniles. For more information, please visit www.nyc.gov/law.

Founded in 1932, the Federal Bar Council is a group of more than 3,700 lawyers who practice in the federal courts of the Second Circuit. Our members include judges, prosecutors, public defenders, professors, experienced private lawyers at firms of all sizes, and lawyers who are just starting out in practice. For additional information about the Council and its activities, please visit the Council’s Web

site at www.federalbarcouncil.org or contact Jeanette Redmond, Executive Director, at (914) 682-8800 or jeanette.redmond@federalbarcouncil.com.

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