

Michael A. Cardozo

New York City Corporation Counsel

As New York City's 77th Corporation Counsel – and chief legal officer of New York City – Michael A. Cardozo serves as legal counsel to the Mayor, elected officials, the City and its agencies. Mr. Cardozo has served as Corporation Counsel since January 1, 2002, the second-longest tenure since New York City established the position in 1683 and the longest-serving Corporation Counsel since the 1880s.

With offices in all five boroughs and in Kingston, N.Y., the Law Department that Mr. Cardozo heads has an active caseload of more than 90,000 lawsuits and legal matters being handled by 690 attorneys in 17 divisions. The office is the third-largest law firm in New York State (behind Skadden Arps and Legal Aid) and the third-largest public law office in the United States (behind the Department of Justice and Legal Aid). Mr. Cardozo routinely tells reporters that he has “the greatest job in the world” due to the diversity of interesting matters with which he deals – and particularly at a time when New York City is driving the national agenda.

Working with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Mr. Cardozo has spearheaded several key municipal legal initiatives, including working to eliminate illegal guns from city streets; encouraging progressive environmental initiatives like PlaNYC; advocating for judicial selection reform and judicial pay raises; supporting the modernization of election machinery; and lobbying to reform local and state tort laws.

As Corporation Counsel, Mr. Cardozo has personally argued cases in Federal and State courts. In April 2007, he argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case involving unpaid property taxes by the U.N. missions of India and Mongolia. Holding 7-2 in the City's favor, the Supreme Court ruled that U.S. courts have jurisdiction to adjudicate real estate tax disputes between localities and foreign nations – an “important decision for the rule of law,” as Mr. Cardozo told *The New York Times* and other leading media.

During Mr. Cardozo's tenure, the Law Department has litigated many significant matters, such as successfully defending the City's subway bag inspection program as a lawful counterterrorism measure; ensuring that the Transport Workers Union (TWU) paid court-ordered fines to the City after engaging in an illegal transit strike; achieving a settlement with the Internal Revenue Service resulting in the City and certain affected employees receiving more than \$280 million for wrongfully withheld Social Security taxes; serving as a plaintiff alongside a national coalition of states and cities in major climate change litigation against the Federal government; prevailing in the New York Court of Appeals in a landmark case that established that the Mayor did not have to enforce local laws if the Mayor believed they were invalid under State or Federal law; and defending the City from lawsuits in response to the World Trade Center attacks.

Major non-litigation matters handled during Mr. Cardozo's leadership have included the drafting of groundbreaking legislation (including laws giving the Mayor control of local schools and the City's historic smoking ban) and handling legal work for major redevelopment projects (including new stadiums for the Mets and the Yankees, development of the Hunts Point Market, and the redevelopment around Ground Zero).

Mr. Cardozo also serves, by mayoral appointment, as the Chair of the Election Modernization Task Force. Mayor Bloomberg formed the Task Force in November 2004 to address voting anomalies

experienced during the City's election that year. Among its recommendations, the panel called for the New York State Legislature to enact much-needed voting machine legislation, so it wouldn't lose \$220 million in Federal funding. Mr. Cardozo also co-chaired a Task Force in 2006 that made recommendations to the Mayor regarding the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the best ways to ensure its continued safety. He also, together with Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs Carol Robles-Roman, regularly advises the Mayor on appointments that the Mayor makes to the judiciary..

As Corporation Counsel, Mr. Cardozo's priorities have included decreasing both the number of litigations in which the City is involved as well as the amount the City pays in settlements and judgments. He achieves these goals through a three-step "early warning" approach: 1) identifying a potential problem before a lawsuit has begun, 2) solving the underlying dispute before it ripens into a litigation, and 3) settling "meritorious" cases as quickly as possible (those in which the City has acted improperly). Mr. Cardozo has also taken vigorous steps to avoid the City being subject to detailed, lengthy and onerous legal "consent decrees" that limit, sometimes for decades, the discretion of City commissioners to make key decisions.

Since assuming office, Mr. Cardozo has implemented various initiatives to lessen the City's legal caseload, modernize and improve the office, and assist the City in managing its budget. For example, acting on Mayor Bloomberg's and Mr. Cardozo's urging, the City Council in June 2003 passed "the adjacent sidewalk owner bill," which shifted liability for most sidewalk accidents from the City to the adjoining landowner. In addition to making sidewalks safer, this step has saved the City about \$40 million a year. Other initiatives taken by Mr. Cardozo since he took office in 2002 included:

- Initiating a Public Service Program that: 1) brings associates from leading law firms to work at the Law Department for up to six months handling New York City cases; 2) alternatively, allows firms to take cases in-house and 3) offers deposition experience and training. The program is "win/win" for everyone – allowing the attorneys to gain invaluable, "hands-on" experience while the Law Department gains extra person-power. To date, more than \$30 million in legal services has been donated to the City by dozens of leading law firms;
- Streamlining the Law Department's technological capacity, including appointing the Department's first Chief Technology Officer to oversee tech advancements and review ways the department can better use its existing technology;
- Initiating diversity advances, such as appointing the Department's first Hispanic division chief and first African-American woman division chief;
- Establishing a Labor & Employment Law Division to handle the City's growing number of labor and employment cases;
- Creating a Media & Communications Department to handle strategic press initiatives, public affairs efforts, and external and internal communications;
- Initiating a new *pro bono* and Bar Association project that encourages Law Department attorneys to participate in *pro bono* and Bar Association activities.

Prior to becoming Corporation Counsel, Mr. Cardozo was a partner at Proskauer Rose LLP, where he was both an active trial lawyer and counsel to numerous sports leagues, including the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association and Major League Soccer. During his tenure at Proskauer, Mr. Cardozo served as co-chair of the firm's 150-person Litigation Department and was elected by his partners on three different occasions to serve on the firm's six-member Executive

Committee. Until his departure in December 2001, Mr. Cardozo also served as co-chair of the firm's Sports Law Group.

Mr. Cardozo is a 1966 graduate of Columbia Law School, where he served as an editor of the Law Review. He received a B.A. in political science from Brown University in 1963. After serving as a law clerk for the late Judge Edward C. McLean in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Mr. Cardozo joined Proskauer as an associate in 1967. He became a partner in 1974.

Mr. Cardozo has long been active in the public sector. From 1996 to 1998, he was President of the 21,000-member Association of the Bar of the City of New York. He is a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and a member of the Board of Directors of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, The American Law Institute and the Executive Committee of the Lawyers Division of the Anti-Defamation League. His numerous previous outside activities included serving as Chair of the Columbia Law School Board of Visitors, Chair of the Fund for Modern Courts, Chair (by appointment of the Governor and Chief Judge) of both the New York State Joint Committee on Judicial Administration and the New York State Task Force on the Appellate Divisions, and, in the mid-1970s, Counsel to Governor Carey's Task Force on Court Reform.

Mr. Cardozo is a distant cousin to former U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Benjamin A. Cardozo. Mr. Cardozo is married to Nancy, his wife of over 40 years. They have two grown daughters, Hedy and Sheryl, and two grandchildren.