



NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

Michael A. Cardozo, *Corporation Counsel*

Press Release

nyc.gov/law

For Immediate Release

**MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG HOSTS
LEADING LAW FIRMS AT GRACIE MANSION EVENT,
OFFERING THANKS FOR MILLIONS IN TIME AND LEGAL EXPERTISE
DONATED TO NEW YORK CITY**

**MEMBERS TAKING PART IN THE NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT'S PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAM
HAVE DONATED ABOUT \$10 MILLION IN THE LAST YEAR ALONE**

Contact: Kate O'Brien Ahlers, Communications Director, (212) 788-0400, media@law.nyc.gov

New York, Oct. 26, 2007— At a Gracie Mansion breakfast this morning, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg honored more than 50 firms that have donated attorney time and legal resources to the New York City Law Department's Public Service Program. The firm list reads like a "Who's Who" of the legal profession, with Program members including many of the City's leading firms.

"These law firms have embraced the highest ideals in public service," noted Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. "By donating their valuable time to the City, they have acted in the noblest traditions of the legal profession and have helped our City enormously. We extend our deepest thanks to the Public Service Program participants for their expertise, dedication and commitment."

"This is an innovative marriage between the public and private sector," added Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo, who heads the Law Department. "Each side receives something valuable. Private firm lawyers gain highly prized trial and deposition experience – and give to a worthwhile cause – while the Law Department gains much needed resources. This is a 'win-win' for everyone."

Over the last 12 months alone, more than 20 firms have donated legal time worth an estimated \$10 million to New York City. Firms participating in the last 12 months include: Allen & Overy LLP; Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP; Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP; Fulbright & Jaworski LLP; Holland & Knight LLP; Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP; Kaye Scholer LLP; Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP; Linklaters LLP; Lynch Rowin LLP; Mayer Brown LLP; Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP; Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP; Proskauer Rose LLP; Quinn Emanuel Urquhart Oliver and Hedges, LLP; Shearman & Sterling LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and Affiliates; Thacher Proffitt & Wood LLP; Thelen Reid Brown Raysman & Steiner LLP; Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP; White & Case LLP; and Winston & Strawn LLP. At today's breakfast, the Mayor also acknowledged the work of attorneys in private practice who again, at no charge, head City boards and commissions.

The Public Service Program, a unique initiative based on the public service/corporate mindset embraced by Mayor Bloomberg, grew out of the strong interest expressed by law firms that aided the Law Department after the Sept. 11, 2001 tragedy. The Program functions as a public/private initiative, where law firms volunteer associate time to the Law Department, assisting it in managing its heavy caseload. In turn, high-caliber attorneys are offered a unique chance to give back to the City of New York in the spirit of public service and bolster their legal skills.

There are three aspects to the Program – “Tort Trial Participants,” “In-House Firm Participants” and “Deposition Participants.”

Tort Trial Participants

Volunteer associates work in the Law Department's Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan and Queens Tort Offices for three to six months, where they experience all aspects of trial work, including arguing motions, picking juries, examining witnesses, and presenting opening and closing statements.

Jeffrey Mishkin, a partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, told guests at the breakfast: “A developmental league is precisely what the Corporation Counsel's Public Service Program provides to the ‘rookies’ we call associates. Understaffed, at times nearly overwhelmed by its huge volume of cases, the Corporation Counsel's office has an enormous need for more talented and capable young lawyers eager to get into the game. When a law firm sends an associate to work in the City's Law Department, it is performing a vital public service, and is helping to ensure the fair and proper administration of justice.” Mishkin added, “But the great irony is that law firms are also serving their own fundamental interests. Just as rookies are the future of any team, associates are the future of any law firm. The best young lawyers crave the very opportunities to perform that law firms are so reluctant to provide at the early stages of a career. When an associate returns to a firm from the Law Department ... that associate has become a far more valuable member of his law firm team.”

In-House Firm Participants

Firms take matters in-house, sometimes cases with far-reaching public significance, giving their associates the chance to participate in court conferences, settlement negotiations, depositions and, ultimately, trials. The associates usually try the case with, and under the supervision of, a firm partner.

Kenneth Taber, national co-head of the litigation practice at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, described his firm's participation in the Program as follows: “I am currently leading a team of 12 Pillsbury litigators serving as co-counsel, with the City, in the City's landmark gun dealer litigation against 27 out-of-state gun dealers. With 60 percent of the murders in New York City committed by someone using an illegal gun, it's hard to imagine a public service project with the potential to make more of a difference to our City. The gun litigation has not only made front-page news, and has been a frequent topic on the editorial pages, it's even recently surfaced in the presidential campaign. We're honored to work on such a high-profile assignment. Our attorneys also relish the hands-on experience from taking a major case like this, especially through what will shortly be an avalanche of depositions, and then a trial next Spring.”

Deposition Participants

Volunteer associates either partner with Law Department staff attorneys to conduct a series of depositions in one or more cases, or spend three or more weeks conducting back to back depositions on a variety of cases. The cases range from complex class actions and multiparty litigation to individual damages actions in various areas of the law.

Arthur Brown, a partner at Kaye Scholer, explained that Kaye Scholer associates have assisted the City in defending a variety of complex tort claims. “The deposition program permitted Kaye Scholer associates to represent the City one day per week for 10 weeks, both taking and defending important depositions. The rewards have been astounding. In the first nine months of the program, 32 Kaye Scholer associates have taken or defended 180 depositions. Associates have approached the deposition program with great enthusiasm – gaining valuable litigation experience while at the same time helping the City. Indeed, the number of requests for participation in the deposition program shows no sign of slowing down. From Kaye Scholer's perspective, this program allows the firm to ‘give back’ to our City, while at the same time providing our associates an excellent opportunity to practice and hone their deposition skills.”

Roy Reardon, a member of Simpson Thacher's Litigation Department, discussed his firm's recent participation in a specialized project requiring scores of depositions to be done on short notice. “We had the experience of taking the depositions of hundreds of claimants seeking damages from arrests during the Republican National Convention in August 2004. Such experiences have proven to be exciting and professionally rewarding, while helping the City deal with a potentially crippling volume of cases,” he noted. “Being part of the Corporation Counsel's Public Service Program enables us to achieve two important objectives. First, it enables us to help our City to continue to provide excellent legal representation. Second, and of significant importance to us, is that it

provides particularly to our younger lawyers, both partners and associates, the opportunity for 'hands-on' professional experience in important litigation, both in and out of the courtroom."

Comments from the Alumni in the Tort Trial Program

- Gregory Starnier, an associate at White & Case, said: "During my time at the Bronx Office, I gained invaluable experience on all aspects of trial practice, from beginning to end, including picking a jury, making opening statements, examining witnesses, arguing motions and more. In three months, I tried eight cases, with three going to verdict. What's more, the trial experience came with the satisfaction of doing public service for New York City and an opportunity to assist the City's lawyers with their ever-increasing case loads. Since returning to the firm, I have already had numerous opportunities to apply the skills I obtained through the program."
- Yehudah L. Buchweitz, an associate at Weil Gotshal, said: "Initially, I observed and assisted with depositions and observed oral argument on motions. Then, I did my own depositions and was in the trial group. [Later] I observed and assisted with jury selection and trials, and then I did my own trials. I was assigned to three trials. I fully prepared each of these trials by doing investigation, drafting openings, closings, and witness outlines, researching and outlining motions *in limine* and jury instructions, and preparing documentary evidence and demonstratives. There is no substitute for learning by doing, and I can say with certainty that I am more confident and comfortable in a courtroom as a result of the externship program."
- Joshua Ruthizer, an associate at Proskauer Rose, said: "The six months I spent with the Corporation Counsel's office as a Public Service Attorney were extremely rewarding on a professional and personal level. The program gave me a wealth of experience I might not otherwise have received at such an early stage in my career. By the time I left the program I had taken seven depositions and had tried by myself more than 15 tort cases in Supreme Court, Bronx County. I prepared the cases for trial, interviewed witnesses, presented the opening and closing statements, conducted examinations and argued motions. Each skill that I learned as a Public Service Attorney has made me a better lawyer. I look forward to bringing these skills back to my firm and applying them to my work with our clients. My colleagues in the Bronx were amazing, and were always willing to sit down and strategize a case with me. This Program gave me the opportunity to spend six months giving something back to the City."
- Denise Backhouse, an associate at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP, said: "I spent four months working full-time in the Brooklyn Office. I was involved in 10 trials, and I first-chaired several of these, including a complex medical case. I selected juries and conducted direct and cross-examinations of expert witnesses. I also defended and took depositions on a daily basis for about six weeks and coordinated investigations into plaintiffs claims. I gained valuable hands-on courtroom experience, and developed litigation and trial skills that enriched my practice. The Program provided a wonderful opportunity to assist the City. "

The Law Department is constantly working to expand and improve the Public Service Program, allowing volunteers to gain experience in the many different aspects of the legal system.

For more information:

- **Firms interested in taking part can contact Public Service Program Coordinators Sheila M. Rossi (212-788-0483, srossi@law.nyc.gov) and Peter E. Wies (212-788-1409, pwies@law.nyc.gov).**
- **Reporters with questions, those looking to interview Corporation Counsel Cardozo, or those needing photos from the Gracie Mansion event can contact the Law Department's Media & Communications Office (212-788-0400, media@law.nyc.gov).**

The New York City Law Department is one of the oldest, largest and most dynamic law offices in the world, ranking among the top three largest law offices in New York City and the top three 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-plus 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 nyc.gov/law.