



NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

Michael A. Cardozo, Corporation Counsel

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT AND PRIVATE FIRMS CONTINUE TO YIELD BENEFITS FROM PUBLIC SERVICE INITIATIVE

**PROGRAM ALSO GAINING SUPPORT FROM NEW FIRMS SEEKING TO ASSIST THE CITY IN HANDLING A
BURGEONING CASE LOAD AND INTERESTED IN GAINING VALUABLE EXPERIENCE FOR THEIR LAWYERS**

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New York, December 16, 2002 -- The New York City Law Department continues to gain support from city law firms for its "Corporation Counsel Public Service Program," a public/private initiative to ease the burgeoning caseload of the city's Law Department and offer an innovative solution to the budget situation while also giving firms the opportunity to gain valuable trial experience for their attorneys.

"By helping the Law Department, these firms are assisting all people in the City," noted Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo. "Our citizens in New York gain not only from the benefit of the knowledge and expertise of these public service lawyers but also from the savings in taxes and resources that we'd normally need to litigate cases."

The initiative, based on the public service/corporate mindset embraced by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, launched broad scale in the spring and has proven both successful for the Law Department and participating law firms, according to associates completing the program.

A total of 10 firms are currently participating in one initiative of the Public Service, called the "Tort Volunteers." This program provides the Law Department with associates to work in its Brooklyn and Manhattan Tort Divisions, giving the junior lawyers an opportunity to gain extensive trial experience by picking juries, arguing motions, examining witnesses and presenting opening and closing statements. The program has flourished to such an extent that one firm -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius -- has already scheduled its third participant.

The Public Service Program has a second segment, a total of 18 firms are taking part in the "Firm Volunteers" initiative. In these cases, city firms have by taken cases or matters in-house on a public service basis, giving their associates the chance to participate in court conferences, settlement negotiations, depositions and -- ultimately -- trials.

The program also recently added a third segment on deposition training.

The Tort Volunteers

Testimonials from attorneys participating in the Tort Volunteers initiative have backed up the success predicted by the Law Department and participating firms. Anthony Dreyer, an Intellectual Property associate with Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, wrote in his departure memo: "I have gained much more confidence in my ability to prepare, try and settle cases." Dreyer's tally after trying cases in the Law Department for four months included one complete defense verdict, one verdict in which the city was deemed only 10 percent responsible, one dismissal and nine cases settled after trial began. He is now completing a six-month clerkship in the Second Circuit before returning to Skadden in the late spring.

Amy J. Sobotkin, a litigation associate at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobsen, expressed similar sentiments about her six-month externship in Brooklyn Torts and how it benefited her firm. "The associate has the opportunity to grow professionally, and at the end of the associate's term at the Law Department, the firm will be receiving an associate whose capabilities extend beyond her class year," she wrote in her departure memo. Sobotkin litigated two trials to verdict, picked about 15 juries and "tried a variety of cases from the simple trip and fall to a false arrest to labor law contracts."

Brian Herman, a litigation associate at Morgan Lewis & Bockius, described why his firm considered assisting the Law Department. "After watching the destruction of Sept. 11 from our office windows, my firm saw the Law Department's Public Service Program as a chance to pitch in and lend a hand to a city in need." After four months in Brooklyn Torts, he wrote in his departure memo: "The lawyers have spent countless hours teaching me how to prepare cases for trial, and, more importantly, how to address issues unique to fast-paced, high-volume litigation. With this program, everyone is a winner. We get the chance to give something back to the city and gain experience not readily available in the private sector, our firms get young lawyers with more trial experience than partners at some large firms and the Law Department - more shorthanded now than ever -- gets a helping hand from eager, hard working attorneys."

Scott Black, a litigation associate who came to the Law Department from Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz, considers himself "extremely fortunate" to have spent six months at the Law Department. "The experience has been tremendous and it has not only given me the opportunity to hone several of my advocacy skills, but it also meant [spending time with] a really special group of people who have served as both mentors and friends. I would encourage all firms to participate in this 'win-win' opportunity. The associates will enjoy their few months while becoming better lawyers, and the firms will ultimately benefit from the addition of well-seasoned litigators upon their return." Scott obtained four jury verdicts in favor of the city, one dismissal by the court in favor of the city and 14 settlements. He also picked approximately 12 juries.

The Firm Volunteers

In the program's second aspect, the "Firm Volunteers" initiative, city firms have taken cases or matters in-house on a public service basis. The associates participating in this program have been involved with court conferences, settlement negotiations, depositions and other pre-trial proceedings. Ultimately, the associates will try the case with, and under the supervision of, a firm partner. Law firms participating in this segment have assisted several divisions of the Law Department, including Affirmative Litigation, Commercial Litigation, Labor and Employment, Special Federal Litigation, and Tort.

Willkie Farr & Gallagher, one firm volunteer, said it "was happy to assist the New York City Law Department with its ever growing number of cases by taking the lead on five cases against the City." Richard Posen, the partner at Willkie Farr & Gallagher overseeing the firm's participation in these cases, said, "This has been a great opportunity for our associates and for the firm to assist the city where we work and live. Willkie Farr has alleviated some of the city's burden resulting from the overflow of cases following Sept. 11, and our associates have gained tremendous experience in running cases through the discovery process, settlement negotiations and trial."

Joel B. Harris, chair of the Litigation Practice Group at Thacher Proffitt & Wood, noted: "We are currently defending four federal court tort cases on behalf of the city. These involve substantial damage claims for alleged violations of civil rights, such as police brutality, wrongful arrest, etc. Each case is assigned to one of our litigation associates, working under the supervision of a litigation partner." He said the firm has received excellent feedback. "Universally, the associates have all reported that they love handling these cases. The firm is equally pleased. Not only are we assisting the city in such difficult times, but our associates are getting real training, dealing with real-life people in real-life situations and arguing before federal judges -- all of which will make them much better litigators and much more valuable to the firm."

Deposition Training

The Law Department just added a third part of the Public Service Program, inviting associates in large firms to conduct a series of depositions in one or more cases within a defined time period. The Law Department expects this program to be extremely popular for the "hands on" experience it will offer.

The ongoing programs continue to benefit the Law Department and the city firms involved. By participating in the programs, firms are able to give their young associates valuable experience handling city cases while the Law Department gains more lawyers to handle city cases. Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg continued to praise the efforts of the Law Department's initiative, noting that "it embraces my corporate/public service ideals while finding innovative solutions to the city's budget crisis."

Cardozo said, "The program has been a great success. We are very grateful for the support the firms in this city have given to us. Their participation has enabled us to continue to litigate the huge volume of cases we have in a way that protects the city's interests to the fullest. At the same time, it gives junior attorneys at these firms valuable trial experience and permits those attorneys to support New York City in a very tangible way at a time when the city needs the help of all of its citizens."

Law firms that have sent associates to try cases at the Law Department include:

Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett; Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler; Shearman & Sterling; Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz; Morgan Lewis & Bockius; Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom; Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson; Weil Gotshal & Manges; Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft; Stroock & Stroock & Lavan; and Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton.

Law firms that have already accepted city cases or matters in-house on a pro bono basis include:

Arent Fox Kintner Plotkin & Kahn; Bingham McCutchen; Blank Rome Tenzer Greenblatt; Coudert Brothers; Cravath Swaine & Moore; Davis & Gilbert; Flemming Zulack & Williamson; Dorsey & Whitney; Kasowitz Benson Torres & Friedman; Katten Muchin Zavis & Rosenman; Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw; Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler; Proskauer Rose; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom; Thacher Proffitt & Wood; Weil Gotshal & Manges; and Willkie Farr & Gallagher.

(Editor's Note: A few firms are participating in both the "Tort Volunteers" and "Firm Volunteers" program, so reporters and editors will note these firms are named twice to ensure proper recognition.)

Law firms that have not yet sent volunteers or taken cases in-house but have offered to participate in the Corporation Counsel Public Service Program include:

Carter, Ledyard & Milburn; Clifford Chance US; Davis Polk & Wardwell; Dewey Ballantine; Debevoise & Plimpton; Fish & Neave; Fitzpatrick, Cella, Harper & Scinto; Gibson Dunn & Crutcher; Greenberg & Traurig; Hodgson, Russ; Hughes Hubbard & Reed; Kelly, Drye and Warren; Kenyon & Kenyon; Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy; Nixon Peabody; Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison; and Schulte Roth & Zabel.

"Once again, the Law Department has greatly appreciated the work of the law firms involved," Cardozo concluded. "We hope they continue to benefit from the services provided by the Corporation Counsel Public Service Program."

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's 650-plus lawyers handle more than 100,000 cases and transactions each year in 17 separate 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 attorneys represent the City on a vast array of civil litigation, legislative and legal issues and in the criminal prosecution of juveniles. Its web site can be accessed through the City government home page at www.nyc.gov or via direct link at www.nyc.gov/html/law/home.html.

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