

Lawyers as Leaders In Providing Services

BY CAROL ROBLES-ROMAN

Pro bono publico — legal service for the public good — is a time-honored tradition among New York City's legal community. Our law firms and private practitioners provide essential resources and legal services to New Yorkers in need of quality representation. We honor volunteer firms and attorneys that challenge legislation, propose new policies, and advocate in state and federal courts on behalf of poor New Yorkers, homeless families and battered women, to name just a few causes. But pro bono service also includes working with the mayor, deputy mayors and city commissioners to assist in leading boards and commissions that work on critical city initiatives.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has drawn top lawyers from all areas of the legal profession to join in the effort to provide essential services to our city. I highlight but a few areas where attorneys are improving our city by donating their time and expertise to a worthy cause, enhancing the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

Charter Revision: The mayor recently appointed the president of St. Francis College, Dr. Frank Macchiarola, a former schools chancellor, to chair the 2003 Charter Revision Commission. This year's commission will study the City Charter in its entirety with particular attention to the possibility of non-partisan elections, changes in procurement, and agency mergers and reforms. Attorneys Kathryn Patterson, Cecilia Norat, director of State Relations for the American International Group, and Human Rights Commissioner Patricia Gatling are also serving on the 2003 Commission.

Campaign Finance Board: In February, the mayor appointed Fredrick A.O. Schwarz Jr., senior counsel with Cravath, Swaine & Moore, as chairman of the New York City Campaign Finance Board. As an independent, non-partisan city agency, this board works to inform voters of the candidates and issues, and maintain the integrity of the Campaign Finance Program.

Conflicts of Interest Board: The City's Conflicts of Interest Board is an independent City agency that enforces the Conflicts of Interest Law, and advises and issues advisory opinions, promulgates rules and provides training. In 2002, the Mayor appointed Steven Rosen-

feld, a partner in the litigation department at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison as chairperson and Angela Mariana Freyre, a partner at Coudert Brothers as a member of the board.

Civilian Complaint Review Board: Last year, Mr. Bloomberg appointed Hector Gonzalez, a partner at Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw, as chairman of the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). The CCRB is an independent agency that investigates, holds hearings on, makes findings and recommends actions on complaints by members of the public against the Police Department that allege misconduct. Also appointed to the board were Victor Olds, vice-president and senior attorney with Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, Inc., and Lawrence Loesch, director of corporate security for Credit Suisse First Boston.



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH LIPPMAN

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Whitney, LLP, was appointed in February to chair the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Judiciary. He, along with Robert Keating, dean of the New York State Judicial Institute at Pace University School of Law, and 17 other attorneys assist in screening and nominating individuals to serve on the criminal, family and interim civil courts. These courts serve New York's most vulnerable citizens: its families, children and crime victims.

New York City Human Rights Commission: The New York City Commission on Human Rights enforces the city's Human Rights Law, one of the nation's most comprehensive civil rights laws, which prohibits discrimination and bias. Last year the mayor appointed: Matt Foreman, an attorney who specializes in nonprofit organizations; William Malpica of Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw; Omar T. Mohammedi, an attorney who specializes in employment discrimination; Bryan Pu-Folkes, the director of the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest's Private Bar Involvement Programs; Jenny Rivera, an associate professor of law at the CUNY School of Law; and Susan R. Scheer, the director of disability services for Columbia University.

The citizens of New York City are indeed well served by volunteer attorneys. There are hundreds of attorneys in private and public practice, as well as academia, who are strengthening this city through their selfless acts of service. I encourage all attorneys in the New York legal community to seek out ways to assist this city in one of its most critical times.

Carol Robles-Roman is deputy mayor for legal affairs and counsel to Mayor Michael Bloomberg.