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ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHBA MEMBERS AND PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE.

CHBA

focus



Two CHBA Members Appointed to the Public Service and Trust Commission

By Erick Diaz

On August 8, 2007, Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers announced the formation of the Public Service and Trust Commission, a diverse panel of forty-one individuals charged with creating a strategic plan that will guide the Judicial Branch in the upcoming years. Appellate Court Judge Alexandra DiPentima chairs the Commission, which is intended to help achieve the Chief Justice's vision of an open, transparent, and accountable judiciary.

Two of the CHBA's founding members, the **Honorable Judge Antonio C. Robaina** and **Attorney Toni M. Smith-Rosario**, were appointed to the Commission. Upon being appointed, Attorney Toni M. Smith-Rosario commented that she hopes to press the issue of court interpreters as an issue of primary concern to Latinos.

The rest of the Commission is comprised of Magistrate Sandra Sosnoff Baird, Judge Robert E. Beach, Jr., Judge John D. Boland, Mr. Joseph F. Camilleri, Mr. William H. Carbone, Judge Thomas J. Corradino, Attorney Joseph D. D'Alesio, Judge Nina F. Elgo, Attorney Melissa A. Farley, Judge Roland D. Fasano, Judge James T. Graham, Ms. Lisa Holden, Attorney Norman K. Janes, Judge Clarence J. Jones, Chief State's Attorney Kevin T. Kane, Supreme Court Justice Joette Katz, Ms. Caren Kittredge, Judge Sandra Vilardi Leheny, Judge Douglas C. Mintz, Attorney Joseph Mirrione, Attorney William H. Prout, Jr., Judge Barbara M. Quinn, Judge Kevin A. Randolph, Attorney Kenneth B. Rubin, Judge William B. Rush, Attorney Michael T. Ryan, Attorney Mary Sommer Sandak, Judge Dan Shaban, Judge Joseph Shortall, Mr. Thomas A. Siconolfi, Attorney Carolyn Signorelli, Attorney Robert Stillman, Chief Public Defender Susan O. Storey, Judge Hillary B. Strackbein, Attorney Thomas J. Ullman, Attorney Frederick S. Ury, Attorney Dawne G. Westbrook and Mr. Alex Wood.

NHLA Needs Our Help!

By Erick Diaz

Jamie Wallack, from New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Inc. (NHLA), has approached the CHBA pleading for Spanish-speaking attorneys who can offer pro bono services to its Hispanic clientele. Jamie informs us that there is special need for attorneys who have a background in family law. If you are interested in volunteering, but lack experience in family law, NHLA will provide training at Wiggin & Dana, 265 Church St. New Haven, CT. If you would like to attend the training, please email ediaz@wiggin.com.

NHLA also has a need for bilingual attorneys interested in doing immigration and landlord-tenant dispute work. The NHLA is glad to provide attorney assistance to this end but have very few attorneys who speak Spanish and they need our help. Please keep in mind that they especially need our help because they are one of the very few organizations who help undocumented immigrants. If you have any questions, please contact Jamie at jwallack@nhlegal.org or phone: 203-946-4811, Ext. 155 fax: 203-498-1238. NHLA is located at 426 State Street New Haven, CT 06510.





Open Editorial Responding to Criticism of Gail P. Hardy's Appointment as State's Attorney

By Toni M. Smith-Rosario

On August 1, 2007, Gail P. Hardy became State's Attorney for the Judicial District of Hartford Attorney Hardy, an 11-year veteran of the Division of Criminal Justice, is the first African American appointed to the position of State's Attorney in Connecticut history. Although the appointment was by a unanimous vote of the Criminal Justice Commission some staff and the outgoing prosecutor raised questions about whether the state's Criminal Justice Commission selected the most qualified candidate. CHBA member Toni Smith Rosario wrote the following editorial in response to such criticism.

As a Hartford native, a woman of color and a state prosecutor, I write to join the many voices offering congratulations and support to Gail P. Hardy, the new State's Attorney for the Hartford Judicial District (J.D.). I am grateful that the Criminal Justice Commission, in making this historic appointment, not only recognized Attorney Hardy's talent as a seasoned prosecutor, but also the importance of diversity and community involvement in selecting leaders within the criminal justice system. I am joined in this message by several affinity bar associations of which I am a member, including the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association, the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association, the Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association and the South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut.

In two recent commentaries, Supreme Court Justice Richard N. Palmer and Appellate Court Judge Lubbie Harper, Jr., have made insightful observations about Attorney Hardy's appointment and its likely effect on the community. As a fellow prosecutor, I would like to expand on three points with respect to Hardy's selection.

First, as noted by Justice Palmer, the hiring of a State's Attorney necessarily involves many considerations and has never been based on seniority or dictated by geographic location. In my view, the most damaging aspect of the public comments blasting Hardy's appointment is that they inaccurately suggest that these factors have been determinative in past appointments. This argument, which distorts the nature of the process to show that Hardy was hired "just" because she is black, unfairly plays to the stereotype that the selection of a diverse candidate necessarily means that standards must have been lowered. Faced with an exceptional pool of candidates, the Commission chose a prosecutor who had a wide range of experience in the criminal justice system, was involved in the Hartford community and had served in a leadership capacity as a prosecutor. Reasonable minds could differ about who is "best" for any position, but it is both inaccurate and a great disservice to our colleague to suggest that her appointment represents a radical departure from existing standards.

Attorney Hardy has twenty-three years of experience in the criminal justice system, including eleven years as a prosecutor, seven of which were spent handling serious felony cases in the Waterbury J.D. Her level of experience hardly represents a departure from any prior benchmark that has been set for State's Attorneys. She actually has been a prosecutor longer than other individuals who have been appointed State's Attorneys, including in Hartford. Indeed, Jack Bailey, the much beloved Chief State's Attorney who died tragically in 2003, had been a prosecutor for less than three years before he was named Hartford's State's Attorney. Because the hiring process has never been based on seniority, the argument that more senior applicants should have been selected essentially subjects Hardy to an entirely different standard than has been applied in the past. Furthermore, seniority as prosecutor does not necessarily speak to one's abilities as a manager or leader in the greater community. Similarly, although State's Attorneys often have worked within the J.D. for which they are hired, it is hardly unprecedented for a candidate to be selected from another J.D. It is unclear why geography should be given significant weight here since Hardy has extensive experience in an urban J.D. that is similar to Hartford, is involved in the Hartford community and is well-acquainted with its leadership.

Second, it bears noting that even though women and people of color are disproportionately impacted by crime, they historically have not been well-represented in the criminal justice system, especially in the ranks of prosecutors. Although diverse candidates increasingly are being hired by the Commission, relatively few women and virtually no people of color have become supervisors. As noted by Judge Harper, it is enormously important that the criminal justice system reflect the diversity that exists within the community that is served, given that the perception and the reality of justice is intertwined. I fear that the caustic comments that have been made will obscure the fact that many people within the Division recognize the need for diversity at all levels. I commend those who have worked toward that goal within the Division, including Chief State's Attorney Kevin T. Kane, our State's Attorneys and other prosecutors in the state, including prosecutors in the Hartford J.D.

Finally, it would be difficult to overstate how meaningful Attorney Hardy's selection has been for many employees of color within the Division. We were elated that the Commission finally had recognized a woman of color as qualified to serve as a State's Attorney. Given that it is 2007, and a number of positions in the criminal justice system have never been held by a woman or a person of color, this occasion is a bittersweet one. Hardy's appointment, however, is a very auspicious sign of progress.



CHBA Celebrates its 14th Annual Awards Celebration

By Erick Diaz

On November 16, 2007, the CHBA hosted its Fourteenth Annual Awards Celebration Dinner at the Hartford Club in Hartford, Connecticut.

The evening began with cocktails and Hispanic background music as CHBA members and attendees relaxed and networked. The formal portion of the evening got off to a great start with a captivating presentation by a Hartford dance group that delighted everyone with *bomba y plena* and salsa dances. CHBA Board Member Edgardo Ramos served as the Master of Ceremony for the evening.

The CHBA honored Kica Matos, Community Services Administrator for the City of New Haven, as its Achievement Award Recipient. Mrs. Matos, who served as the keynote speaker, shared some of her experiences advocating on behalf of Hispanic immigrants. In addition, CHBA Board Member Alexia E. Cruz presented the Third Annual CHBA Corporate Award to Travelers in recognition of all that Travelers has done to improve diversity in the Connecticut legal community and for their diversity efforts in general.

To conclude the evening, the CHBA awarded its highest number of student scholarships to date, by recognizing five deserving law students from across the state. The recipients were: Dinamary Arvelo from the University of Connecticut School of Law, Alicia S. DeSouza-Rocha from Quinnipiac University School of Law, Marisol Orihuela from Yale Law School, Megan E. Rogers from Quinnipiac University School of Law, and Raul S. Zamudio from University of Connecticut School of Law. Congratulations to all!

2007 CHBA Summer Social

By Rene Alejandro Ortega

On July 28, 2007, the CHBA held its annual summer outing at Rene Ortega's home in Wethersfield, Connecticut. Beginning at 2:00 p.m. and lasting late into the evening, at least thirty members and guests enjoyed an afternoon and evening of *arroz con pollo*, *empanadas*, *flan* and a delicious special-recipe *sangria*. The event was a great opportunity to get to know our members on a more informal level. The summer rain was not enough to keep people away. We hope to see you in 2008!



SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- ✓ **March 11, 2008 at Day Pitney LLP, Hartford Office.**
- ✓ **April 26, 2008, Annual Meeting and Elections, Location TBD.**



Noticias En Breve...

•October 17, 2007, the CHBA, along with the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association, the Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association, and the South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut, hosted a reception for Connecticut Supreme Court Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers. The event was held at the Hartford Club and drew over 100 of the minority bar associations' members.

•On October 20, 2007, CHBA Board Members Joaquin Madry and Cristina Berrocal were married in a lovely ceremony. The reception was held at Mohegan Sun Resort and Casino. Congratulations and blessings to both!

•On November 10, 2007, CHBA Board Members Cristina Berrocal and Joaquin Madry represented the CHBA at the Quest 2008 Higher Education Conference held at the University of Hartford. The Quest Conference encourages Latinos to pursue professional and graduate education.

•In December 2007, former CHBA President and CHBA Board Member Alexia E. Cruz was appointed as one of the nine Commissioners of the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. Alexia is also a Vice President and Senior Counsel at Travelers' Central Litigation Group. Congratulations Alexia!



Connecticut Hispanic Bar
Association

Visit us at: [www.
http://chba.ctbar.org/](http://chba.ctbar.org/)

