

The
90
Greatest Washington Lawyers
of the Last 30 Years

30th Anniversary
Special Issue

It would have been fairly simple to create a 30th anniversary issue that glanced over the biggest events in the Washington legal community since our newspaper was founded in 1978. Grab a few of the bound volumes, search the electronic archives, find a bunch of old pictures, and voila! Instant issue.



Instead, we embarked upon a far more challenging enterprise. Late last year, we decided to try to name the lawyers who had the greatest impact on the Washington legal community over the last 30 years.

We divided our task into three parts. The editors selected 30 lawyers whose foresight and hard work have changed the business of law in Washington. These are our visionaries. We also picked 30 lawyers whose community and public service has set an example that other D.C. lawyers should follow. These are our champions.

In addition, we're remembering 30 pioneers—advocates who have passed away since 1978, but whose contribution to busi-

ness and the community made an indelible impact on the way law in Washington is practiced today.

Earlier this year, we asked readers for their suggestions, and hundreds of names flowed into our newsroom. We also relied heavily upon our own reporting and institutional knowledge to make the final choices.

From the beginning, we made a decision to concentrate on the private bar, public-interest organizations, and career government attorneys. We deliberately exempted high government officials (Supreme Court justices and attorneys general, for instance) from our list—unless their contributions had a specific impact on Washington's legal community. Other than that, the qualification for inclusion was a law degree and exceptional service during the 30 years that we have published.

—DAVID BROWN, EDITOR IN CHIEF & PUBLISHER



Robert Strauss

In 1971, when Robert Strauss moved from Texas to Washington to become treasurer of the Democratic Party, he brought his law firm along. At the time, it was a novel move, but it was decisive for Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld. “He was one of the first people to see the need for a Washington office,” says R. Bruce McLean, the chairman of Akin Gump. The firm arrived as the federal government moved towards more regulation of business. Strauss, now 89, was among the first to understand “the nexus between government and policy and business,” says Joel Jankowsky, the head of Akin Gump’s policy practice, and he positioned the firm to help clients navigate public policy for clients.

Akin Gump’s profile rose with Strauss’ own. He was President Jimmy Carter’s special envoy to the Middle East, and was both the last ambassador to



the Soviet Union and the first to Russia for President George H.W. Bush. In one generation, the Dallas shop he helped found in 1945 has grown into a Washington stalwart with offices abroad and more than 1,000 lawyers. The D.C. office has 259 attorneys and brought in more than \$200 million in revenue last year. “What he’s meant to this law firm,” says name partner Alan Feld, “is incalculable.” —ATTILA BERRY

visionaries

Thomas Goldstein

Thomas Goldstein had none of the credentials you would expect of Supreme Court practitioners. No Ivy League law degree (he went to American). No Supreme Court clerkship. No experience in the solicitor general’s office.

In spite of that—or, more likely, because of it—Goldstein set his sights on the exclusive club anyway, and in the last decade has transformed the practice. Now 37, his ascent is unique enough that Sony Pictures Television has an option to base a series on his life.

Goldstein caught the Supreme Court bug while interning for National Public Radio’s Nina Totenberg during law school. At Jones Day, he combed lower court decisions to find circuit splits, but when he started a firm with wife Amy Howe in 2000 he decided to “do it on steroids.”

He cold-called lawyers who had lost in lower courts and offered to take their cases to the high court for free. That earned a harrumph from then-practitioner John Roberts Jr.: “If I’m going to have heart bypass surgery, I wouldn’t go to the surgeon who calls me up.”



But it was a formula that got Goldstein in the door. His next innovation was SCOTUSBlog, the site that made him everyone’s go-to Supreme Court expert. In 2004, he launched the first clinic focusing on high court litigation at Stanford—since copied by six other law schools.

Two years later came his reward: a lucrative offer to head Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld’s appellate practice. On May 1, he became head of the D.C. office’s 95-lawyer litigation section and is still generating ideas. The latest: ramping up Internet resources for firm clients and others. “They’ve given me the keys to the car since day one and let me do whatever I want to do.” —TONY MAURO

