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What's Happened to the Lawyers Who Worked for Spitzer?

By ELLEN ROSEN

After reining in Wall Street analysts, curbing mutual fund trading abuses and corralling some of the biggest insurance companies in the industry, what do you do for an encore?

For the lawyers who worked under [Eliot Spitzer](#) in the New York attorney general's office, the options have ranged from law firm partnerships to state agency heads.

A changing of the guard is the usual time when government lawyers make a change. This was no exception, even though [Andrew M. Cuomo](#), Mr. Spitzer's successor, did not force anyone to leave.

And as is typical in these exoduses, some lawyers chose to cross the aisle and go to work for a big Wall Street law firm.

Michele Hirshman, the first deputy attorney general, said she "decided pretty early on that there wasn't a lot I wanted to continue to do in government." She ultimately decided to work for Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, where she could work on corporate investigations and white-collar defense matters.

"I had a great legal job in the public sector, but what I had learned about myself is that I liked being a lawyer and what I liked the most was negotiating and counseling," she said.

Still, Ms. Hirshman had a tough decision, since she had overseen many of the high-profile matters championed by the office, including the Wall Street analyst cases. (Analysts were accused of tailoring research to woo investment banking business.)

Interviewing for jobs was a little unusual, she said. "In the course of the process, partners would ask 'what's your business plan?' For me it was a little awkward. I have no client base and bring no clients with me."

Dietrich L. Snell, the former deputy attorney general for public advocacy, also wanted to continue litigating. His eight years in the attorney general's office included assisting the 9/11 Commission in Washington.

"The week I returned the suit was filed against [Marsh & McLennan](#)," Mr. Snell said. "It was the kickoff of all the insurance cases. From that point forward I was supervising virtually them all." Mr. Snell also worked on cases involving the research analysts and mutual funds, as well as those that involved spinning, the practice of investment banks offering shares of initial public offerings to their clients.

For Mr. Snell, like Ms. Hirshman, deciding where to go next was difficult. After speaking with lawyers at a number of firms, he chose to join Proskauer Rose, in part because Robert J. Cleary, with whom he worked at the United States attorney's office in New Jersey, had joined the firm two years earlier. Mr. Snell, who will

join the firm later this month, will also work on investigations and white-collar defense cases.

Caitlin Halligan, the former solicitor general, just finalized her next step. She left the attorney general's office in January, but not before arguing one final case before the [United States Supreme Court](#). She won that case — involving the state's power to regulate waste disposal — on April 30.

Her next stop is Weil Gotshal & Manges, which yesterday elected her as a partner, where she will head up the appellate practice. In choosing the firm, she was, she said, “committed to finding a place where I can continue some of the appellate work I've done” and she plans to continue to teach a seminar in the fall at Columbia Law School.

Other lawyers on Mr. Spitzer's staff have followed him.

Peter Pope, the former head of the criminal division, is Mr. Spitzer's policy director.

While relations between the governor and the state's legislators have been somewhat contentious, Mr. Pope seems to relish his new role: “A prosecution is a zero-sum game. In the course of most negotiations, a defendant may need to give up liberty or large sums of money, and these are difficult negotiations, where someone comes out behind. But when talking about legislation or a host of regulatory initiatives, by putting people in a room together, everyone can walk out a winner.”

He acknowledged that “these are not easy discussions — they're intricate and there are always fiscal implications.”

Avi Schick, the deputy attorney general who helped bring the lawsuit against [Richard A. Grasso](#), the former [New York Stock Exchange](#) chairman, seeking to recoup part of Mr. Grasso's compensation, also seems engaged by his new job as president of the Empire State Development Corporation, which oversees large projects. He had intended to take a private-sector job, but jumped at the chance at Empire State. Recently, the governor also appointed him chairman of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which focuses on redeveloping the World Trade Center area.

David D. Brown, the former head of the investment management division, took a three-month sabbatical in which he “basically chopped wood and cleared out my head” before assuming his new job as head of the New York State Dormitory Authority. His new position also appears a far cry from his work prosecuting financial and insurance firms, but the Dormitory Authority, is, he said, one of the largest issuers of municipal bonds nationwide, requiring him to maintain contact with many financial firms.

Because the authority oversees a large amount of construction, he is hoping to help the state in its efforts to “go green.” “I've come in with that as my mantra,” he said.

A Brown predecessor, Eric R. Dinallo, has returned to the public sector after several years working as a corporate lawyer. He initially joined [Morgan Stanley](#), where he worked for three years before becoming general counsel of the Willis Corporation, the insurance company. But he has returned to the public sector, to become superintendent of the state's insurance division. “I wasn't contemplating going back to public service,” he said, “but when the opportunity arose, I viewed it as a once in a lifetime opportunity to combine

skills from the public and private sectors.”

And what does Mr. Spitzer think of his old team? “For eight years, their collective depth and breadth of experience, intricate understanding of their policy areas and the law, and their resolution of purpose produced revolutionary results for the public,” he said in a statement.

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