Speakers and Featured Ombuds

Chuck Howard
Chuck Howard is a Partner and General Counsel of Shipman & Goodwin LLP. He has represented ombudsman offices at major corporations, universities, and other organizations for almost thirty years. Mr. Howard is the author of The Organizational Ombudsman: Origins, Roles, and Operations - A Legal Guide. From 2013 to 2018, he chaired or co-chaired the Dispute Resolution Section Ombuds Committee; and in 2018, he was elected as Budget Officer of the Dispute Resolution Section. He has been a civil practice litigator for over forty years and is included in Best Lawyers in America® and recognized as a “Connecticut Super Lawyer®.” He graduated from the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and from the University of Virginia School of Law.

William Maurer
Associate Ombudsman
U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

Bio
William (Bill) Maurer is an Associate Ombudsman at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). At DOE he has driven results including improved efficiencies and job performance, enhanced organizational learning and leadership, increased employee engagement and decreased fear of reprisal. In 2016, Bill and the DOE Ombudsman Team were honored with a Secretary's Achievement Award.

At other Federal agencies, Bill co-designed, organized, and served as a national trainer on a Secretary’s initiative to address performance deficiencies. He also facilitated a coast-to-coast initiative supporting the Department’s strategic plan to transform the way the agency does business. In addition, Mr. Maurer is a shared resource coach, facilitator, mediator and mentor throughout Federal government.

Bill served as Chair of the Coalition of Federal Ombudsman (COFO) and on the Executive Committee for four years. For six years, Bill presided as Vice President of the Board of Directors for a private non-profit community mediation center.

Bill has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from George Washington University and attended the Harvard Kennedy School of Government Senior Manager in Government Program. Bill is a certified organizational ombudsman practitioner and a certified executive leadership coach.

Program Description
The U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of the Ombudsman was established in 2012 as an independent, neutral, confidential and informal resource available to all Department of Energy (DOE) federal employees. The Ombudsman staff increases organizational focus on mission critical activities by helping senior leaders, managers, supervisors, and staff to:

- Minimize unwarranted distractions in the workplace
- Increase employee engagement
- Expeditiously address individual and organization matters

DOE Ombuds coach employees at all levels of the organization, facilitate conversations between parties, refer visitors to appropriate resources, consult on organizational changes, provide group support, train leaders, and educate the workforce on conflict resolution. In
addition, the Office elevates systemic issues and shares conflict prevention strategies with senior leaders when appropriate. The Administrative Conference of the United States benchmarked DOE’s Office of the Ombudsman as a model Ombuds office within the Federal government.

Elizabeth Stone  
Ombudsman  
Gallaudet University

Bio  
Liz Stone is a certified and trained organizational ombudsman practitioner, affiliated with the International Ombudsman Association. Her office provides a trusting, safe, confidential place for students, faculty and staff to discuss any issue, dispute, or question in an informal, independent, and neutral setting. Liz has mediation certification from the Harvard Negotiation Institute, a Masters from American University, and received her Bachelor's in Social Work from the Rochester Institute of Technology. She has served as the Gallaudet University Ombuds for nearly four years.

Program Description  
Launched in January 2008, the Office of the Ombuds serves as an impartial, independent, informal, and confidential conflict management resource to help resolve complaints, misunderstandings and conflicts which stem from University policies, procedures, practices, and relationships. The Office of the Ombuds is a safe place to go where concerns can be discussed confidentially and informally in an "off-the-record" fashion. The Office serves all members of the Gallaudet campus community, including students and their families, faculty, staff, alumni, and others.

The Ombuds adheres to the Code of Ethics, the Standards of Practice, and the Best Practices of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) in providing services to visitors. The Ombuds hosts an annual event to celebrate International Conflict Resolution Day which falls on the third Thursday of October each year.

Virginia L. Behr  
Ombudsman, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER)  
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Bio  
As Ombudsman since 2007, Virginia addresses questions and complaints from CDER-regulated industry (pharmaceutical companies), law firms, health care practitioners, and consumers. She is an active Coalition of Federal Ombudsman member and served on its Executive Committee for three years. She mediates cases as a collateral duty for the federal government-wide Shared Neutrals program and FDA’s Conflict Prevention and Resolution Program. After a brief research position at the NIH and USUHS, Virginia started her FDA career as a regulatory project manager in CDER’s Division of Antiviral Products in 1999, later becoming its Chief of Project Management Staff. She provided regulatory expertise for multi-disciplinary teams and supervised the management of Investigational New Drug Applications (IND), Biologic Licensing Applications (BLA), and New Drug Applications (NDA) for the treatment and/or prevention of HIV/AIDS, herpes, influenza, hepatitis, and other viruses.
Virginia earned her B.S. degree in psychology from Washington and Lee University. When off duty, Virginia explores new places near and far, canoes, flexes her creative side in the kitchen, chases after her young sons, plays competitive volleyball, and hopes to improve her fledgling surfing skills.

Program Description
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for protecting the public health. Within the FDA, CDER’s mission is to protect and promote public health by helping to ensure that human drugs are safe and effective for their intended use, that they meet established quality standards, and that they are available to patients.

There are several ombudsmen at the FDA. The CDER Ombudsman program was established in 1995 and now adheres to the three core standards of practice identified in the 2016 Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS) study report, which are impartiality, confidentiality, and independence. The program is also committed to the common ombudsman characteristics of informality, a commitment to fairness, and a credible process for resolving issues.

The ombuds address questions and complaints from CDER-regulated industry (e.g. pharmaceutical companies), law firms, health care practitioners, and consumers and informally resolve disputes between those entities and CDER. Disputes can be of a regulatory, scientific, or administrative nature. The program also serves as a one-stop-shop for quick and informal advice or referrals, receives feedback about CDER’s programs and overall performance, advises Center management about program issues, and can assist with resolution of scientific differences of opinion among CDER staff.

Joanne Dea
Ombudsperson
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Bio
Joanne Dea established the first U.S. Department of Agriculture Ombudsperson’s Office to assist farmers and ranchers. Prior to joining USDA, Ms. Dea worked at the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), where she served as a conflict resolution specialist in that agency’s Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center for ten years. In that role, she worked to foster collaboration among multiple stakeholders on complex environmental issues such as water quality standards for Native American tribes, water reuse, and air quality.

Before joining EPA, Ms. Dea worked in local government administering housing-related programs and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal. Ms. Dea received her B.S. degree in Urban and Regional Planning from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. She is also a graduate of American University’s certificate program in Managing Conflict in the Workplace and Georgetown University’s certificate program in Leadership Coaching.

Program Description
In 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) created the Office of the Ombudsperson (Office) to assist USDA in identifying and addressing issues relating to program access by historically underserved farmers and ranchers. The Ombudsperson provides independent, impartial analysis and recommendations to the Secretary and other USDA officials to promote continuous improvement of USDA programs and to provide equal access for all. The
Ombudsperson works to identify barriers, if any, that may prevent or reduce the ability of members of historically underserved groups to participate in USDA programs. The Ombudsperson’s recommendations are informed by review and evaluation of data relating to program participation by historically underserved farmers and ranchers, as well as input and feedback provided by both external and internal stakeholders.

The Office serves in a neutral role and is independent of other parts of the USDA organization. In addition, this Office works with individual farmers and ranchers to connect them with the right individuals within the USDA program offices. For more information about this Office, see www.usda.gov/ombudsperson.

Tangita Daramola
Competitive Acquisition Ombudsman
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Bio
Tangita Daramola was named the Competitive Acquisition Ombudsman (CAO) in October 2011 after serving as Acting CAO since June 2009. Ms. Daramola began her career as a Presidential Intern and has held a number of senior positions, including assignments within the Office of the Secretary, Office of the Administrator, and Centers for Beneficiary Services. Prior to being named the CAO, she served as the Senior Advisor to the first Medicare Beneficiary Ombudsman, where she worked to establish the requirements for Ombudsman services within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and developed complaint data reporting mechanisms for the Medicare Drug Program. She was also the Director of the Division of Beneficiary Inquiry Trends and Analysis, where she was instrumental in establishing more effective national customer service standards for written and electronic complaints and inquiries.

Ms. Daramola has provided ongoing support to the Agency’s priority initiatives and recently was asked to develop strategic planning initiatives to promote CMS’ external communication programs. Her passion has been to focus the attention of the Agency on issues impacting vulnerable populations. Ms. Daramola holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Howard University and a Master of Administration degree from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Program Description
The Competitive Acquisition Ombudsman is a statutorily established ombudsman office within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The CAO is charged with responding to inquiries and complaints from suppliers and individuals about the application of the Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Competitive Bidding Program, as well as provide an Annual Report to Congress. This Program went into effect on January 1, 2011 for more than 700,000 beneficiaries who use DMEPOS, with the goal of changing the amount Medicare pays for DMEPOS items and services while maintaining access and quality. The CAO plays a vital role in ensuring that Agency processes respond effectively to inquiries and complaints about the Program and notifying Agency leadership about potential systemic issues that may affect beneficiaries’ access to quality DMEPOS items and services.

The CAO works closely with CMS components and its contractors, as well as with external partners, to: 1) Respond to suppliers’ and individuals’ complaints and inquiries; 2) Assist CMS in ensuring that issues are resolved; and 3) Assist CMS in ensuring that a comprehensive process for timely responses to suppliers and individuals is in place.
Nina E. Olson  
National Taxpayer Advocate  
Taxpayer Advocate Service  
Internal Revenue Service

Bio
Nina E. Olson, National Taxpayer Advocate, leads the Taxpayer Advocate Service, an independent organization within the Internal Revenue Service. Ms. Olson is the voice of the taxpayer at the IRS and before Congress. Under her leadership, the Taxpayer Advocate Service helps taxpayers resolve problems with the IRS and addresses systemic issues affecting groups of taxpayers. Her Annual Report to Congress identifies the most serious problems facing taxpayers and recommends solutions. In 2015, Congress codified the provisions of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights for which Ms. Olson had long advocated. Ms. Olson convened the First International Conference on Taxpayer Rights in 2015 held in Washington, D.C., followed by conferences in Vienna and Amsterdam. In 2017, Ms. Olson received the American Bar Association Section of Taxation's Distinguished Service Award and the Jules Ritholz Memorial Merit Award for outstanding dedication, achievement, and integrity in the field of civil and criminal tax controversies. Tax Analysts honored Nina Olson as one of ten outstanding women in tax from over 300 nominations in 2016. Ms. Olson is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and North Carolina Central School of Law, and she holds a Master of Laws degree in taxation from Georgetown University Law Center.

Program Description
The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) is an independent organization within the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Our job is to ensure that every taxpayer is treated fairly and that you know and understand your rights. As an independent organization within the IRS, we protect taxpayers’ rights under the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, help taxpayers resolve problems with the IRS, and recommend changes that will prevent the problems.

Dawn Miller Sander  
Contract Ombuds  
Conflict Transformation Associates, LLC

Bio
Dawn Miller Sander is a senior partner at Conflict Transformation Associates, LLC, (CTA) where she provides innovative ombuds on-call services, as well as, facilitation, mediation, and training to a variety of clients in public, private, and non-profit sectors. Dawn has been doing this work for 6 years and her clients include the Women of AT&T, the largest AT&T employee resource group, and a division of the Baltimore County Public Schools.

Prior to founding CTA, Dawn spent over two decades working in sales management at AT&T. It was there that she discovered her passion for bringing transformation to organizations and learned to address workplace conflict in a positive and productive manner.

Dawn earned her Master’s Degree in Conflict Transformation, with a Minor in Restorative Justice from Eastern Mennonite University’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. Dawn earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration, with Minors in Communication and Human Services from Notre Dame of Maryland University.
She is a member of the International Ombudsman Association, Maryland Program for Mediator Excellence (MPME) and the Mid-Atlantic Ombudsman Network (MON).

**Program Description**
Conflict Transformation Associates LLC (CTA) is a certified Virginia small, women-owned, and minority (SWaM) consulting firm specializing in the use of conflict transformation tools and practices with locations in the Washington DC and Austin metro areas.

Conflict transformation is the philosophy of viewing conflict as an opportunity to create positive change. The practice of conflict transformation is an emerging concept in the public and corporate sector; it has been used by ombudsmen, mediators and alternative dispute resolution practitioners (ADR) for many years to bring peace to the world. Since 2013 CTA has been providing innovative ombuds on-call services, as well as, facilitation, mediation, training and coaching services to a variety of clients in public, private, and non-profit sectors.