

Top Government Appointees Where Are They Now?

By Deborah Guyol

Women who scale political heights find doors open to them when they leave office. Although there remains a gender gap in government appointments, women lawyers who have been appointed to high-level government jobs, like men, use their public sector experience to catapult their careers. They also use their experience to further their visions and values, which often emphasize gender equity and other forms of social reform.

Varied Paths, Emphasis on Service

Jamie Gorelick has leveraged her government experience to return to the private sector in a post where she can contribute to positive social change. A Washington litigator for four years after graduating from Harvard Law School in 1975, Gorelick then held positions in the Departments of Energy and Defense. She was deputy attorney general under Janet Reno from 1994 until 1997. During her time in government, Gorelick found management both challenging and satisfying. Admired while in office for her efficiency, respected by Republicans as well as Democrats, she had many options when she left her government post. She chose the private sector because her government service had taught her that more could be accomplished with the cooperation of business than through regulation of it.

Now vice chair at Fannie Mae, the country's third largest corporation (in terms of assets) and the largest provider of funds for home mortgages, Gorelick says she can direct funds into the inner cities in a way "that will have a catalytic and transforming effect on communities with a degree of freedom and agility that no one in government could have." She tells how a \$35 million loan from

Fannie Mae helped Howard University rehabilitate LeDroit Park, the community surrounding it. It was dangerous and derelict in 1997. "You should see it now!" Gorelick exclaims. If this had been a government program, she says, "We'd still be talking about it."

After serving in four government posts from 1994 to 2001, Susan Esserman also decided to return to the private sector. She practiced international trade law at Steptoe & Johnson from 1978 to 1994, worked in the Department of Commerce during President Clinton's first term, then was general counsel to the U.S. trade representative and later deputy trade representative. Like Gorelick, Esserman believes her return to the private sector gives her both maximum flexibility and the chance to make a difference. Esserman believes trade and technology can benefit women in developing countries—if they are able to participate. While in office she worked on a project that brought computers to a school in South Africa. That school uses them during the day and the community uses them at night. This community was chosen because it contained a highly effective women's cooperative that would be helped by access to technology. Now, practicing law again at Steptoe, Esserman hopes to continue to make a difference in

trade and commercial practices.

Shirley Hufstедler, the first woman appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, was also the first secretary of the Department of Education under President Carter, taking the post, she says, "because I hoped I could make a contribution for the benefit of the country." She created the department from several departments and agencies, integrated 126 programs, established a general counsel's office, and did it with fewer people than had staffed the many component programs.

Since leaving the Carter administration, Hufstедler has practiced law in Los Angeles, taught at Stanford Law School, and chaired the Commission on Immigration Reform. She has been a trustee or director of such not-for-profits as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the MacArthur Foundation, the Aspen Institute, the Institute for Civil Justice, and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. She has served on the boards of business corporations, including US West and Hewlett Packard and is currently a trustee of California Institute of Technology. "I always wanted to learn what the next thing is to be learned," she says of her varied commitments. She sees her work with educational



and philanthropic institutions as a way to give people “who do not understand these institutions or what their function is in society a way to appreciate how vital they are to the health and well-being of the country.”

Charlene Barshefsky practiced law at Steptoe & Johnson in Washington, D.C., before being named deputy trade representative for Asia and Latin America in 1993.

In 1996 she advanced to U.S. trade representative, and she remained in that post through the end of the Clinton administration. Barshefsky was known as a tough negotiator. According to Susan Esserman, one feature of Barshefsky’s tenure was the prominence achieved by women around her. “Often we would go to trade meetings and have all-women teams.” Barshefsky has resumed her law practice, as senior international

partner at Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering.

Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator Carol Browner is currently a senior fellow at the Aspen Institute and a director of the Audubon Society. In addition, she has joined with Madeleine Albright and three other international specialists to form a global strategy consulting firm that provides analysis to governments and businesses confronting the fast-changing global economy and political climate.

Margaret Heckler was a Massachusetts lawyer and member of Congress before President Reagan nominated her to head the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 1983. Reportedly under pressure from his staff, Reagan asked her to resign that post in 1985 and appointed her ambassador to Ireland, where she served until retiring in 1989.

Heckler is proud of her work at HHS, where she created a task force to establish baseline data on the health needs of minorities and oversaw development of baseline data on breast cancer as well. She knew nothing about AIDS until a California health consultant told her of the ravages he had seen in San Francisco hospitals. In the early eighties, before many had even heard of AIDS, Heckler decided AIDS research was “the number one health priority in America,” and helped to gain funding for it, threatening to quit the position if funds were not allotted. Heckler looked forward to practicing law following her retirement but changed her course after a “transforming spiritual experience.” Although she remains involved with business, sitting on various boards and advising new companies and budding entrepreneurs, she has “lost her appetite for making money.” She now works primarily with ministries helping the poor, especially in the area of health care. She feels that only since this life-transforming moment has her life’s purpose become clear to her.

No Lack of Opportunity

After leaving their government appointments, some women lawyers

A Brief History of Women in the Cabinet

Who now recalls the achievements of Frances Perkins, the first woman to serve in the United States cabinet? Perkins was Secretary of Labor under FDR for 12 years, from 1933 until 1945. She is associated with so many New Deal programs that, without her, it might not have been the New Deal. The Social Security Act of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 were perhaps the high points of her crusades. She was a reformer, driven by having witnessed appalling factory conditions at the turn of the 20th century, as well as the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, which killed scores of young women.

Oveta Culp Hobby, the second woman cabinet member, became Secretary of the new Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1953. If Perkins was a single-minded crusader, Hobby was a Renaissance woman, who read the Congressional Record at age 10 and the Bible at age 13. She attended law school but never practiced law, although as a clerk of the State Banking Commission she codified the banking laws of Texas. She went into the newspaper publishing business with her husband, former Texas governor William Pettus Hobby. In 1941 she was named director of the newly-created WAAC (Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps). Despite her lack of military experience, she developed and organized the WAAC from the ground up, and was made a colonel for her efforts. As Secretary of HEW she devised a plan to pool \$7 billion in federal, state, and local funds to build schools to accommodate baby boom children.

Patricia Roberts Harris became the first African-American woman to attain a cabinet-level appointment in 1977, when President Carter nominated her Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Before her cabinet career, she had been a trial lawyer in the US Department of Justice, a professor and dean of Howard University School of Law, and a partner at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Kampelman. She was also the first African-American woman ambassador (to Luxembourg, 1965–1967), the first African-American woman to serve in the United Nations, and the first African-American woman on the boards of directors of IBM, Scott Paper Company, and Chase Manhattan Bank. Her trail-blazing achievements were honored with the issuance of a postage stamp bearing her image in February 2000.

There were no cabinet-level appointments of women in the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. Ford appointed one woman, Carla Hills; Carter, Reagan, and Bush senior each named three; and Clinton made twelve appointments of women to his cabinet. In the second Bush cabinet, five of seventeen positions are filled by women. The percentage of women appointed to all positions requiring Senate confirmation rose from 13.5 percent in the Carter administration to 27.4 percent in the Clinton administration. Women in power are no longer an anomaly.

—D.G.

have pursued elective office. Patricia Roberts Harris (see sidebar) ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Washington, D.C., before her early death in 1985. Janet Reno, perhaps the best-known woman lawyer in the Clinton administration, is running for governor of Florida. Elizabeth Dole, who served as Cabinet secretary for two federal departments under two presidents, Reagan and Bush, and as consumer affairs adviser for President Nixon, considered a run for president in 2000 and has announced she will seek Jesse Helms's Senate seat in 2002.

Many appointees resume academic careers. Harris was a full-time professor at George Washington University Law School. Donna Shalala, after serving eight years as Clinton's Secretary of Health and Human Services (the longest tenure ever in that position), is president of the University of Miami. Prior to her political appointment, she became the youngest woman ever to lead a major U.S. college, Hunter College in New York City, from 1980 to 1988 and was chancellor of the University of Wisconsin from 1988 until 1993. Madeleine Albright, the first woman secretary of state, was a professor at Georgetown

University from 1982 until 1993. Now, in addition to her work with the Albright Group, she is a visiting scholar for the 2001–02 academic year and will return to Georgetown in the fall of 2002.

Like Albright and Shalala, Condoleezza Rice has alternated between politics and academia. She joined the faculty at Stanford University in 1981 but interrupted her career there for stints in Washington, first to work on nuclear strategic planning at the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1986 to 1988 and then as director of Soviet and East European affairs with the National Security Council from 1989 to 1991. Rice returned to Stanford and in 1993 was named provost, ranking just below the university president on the operational chart. She is back in Washington now as President Bush's national security adviser.

The women who have left these posts now sit on corporate boards, hold high positions in nonprofit organizations, and receive honorary degrees and other awards. Jamie Gorelick received the ABA's Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award in 1997 and was named one of the country's 50 most

powerful women in business by *Fortune* magazine in 2000. Shirley Hufstедler's name was in play for the 1993 Supreme Court nomination that went to Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She was the first woman to receive the ABA Medal, awarded by the ABA Board of Governors to individuals who have given notable service to the cause of American justice, in 1995, and in 2000 received the ABA's Margaret Brent Award. Madeleine Albright is much in demand as a speaker. Asked if they believe they have fewer opportunities than men leaving similar positions, these women, perhaps not surprisingly, said no.

Government service can be a path to wealth and power, but it can also be a way to put one's ideals into action. These women view their time in government office as an opportunity to serve, to give back, to help others. And when their government terms end, they see their subsequent careers as providing opportunities to continue doing the work they believe in—the work they believe will bring about change. 🍷

Deborah Guyol is a lawyer and writer in Portland, Oregon.