

Monday, December 24, 2007

D.C.'s attorney general resigns.

Â Bill of RightsÂ (From public domain.)Â The District of Columbia s the land of taxation without voting Congressional representation. CongressÂ may veto legislation passed by the city council and signed by theÂ mayor. Judges are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate, rather than having the mayor and city council handle it. The lion's share of felonies are prosecuted by the United States Justice Department through the United States Attorney's Office, rather than through the local Attorney General's Office. Â I deal with the D.C. Attorney General's Office -- formerly named the Corporation Counsel's Office -- when defending drunk driving cases and various other misdemeanors (e.g., indecent exposure and underage drinking), suing the D.C. government, defending businesses against enforcement of D.C.'s adult entertainment regulations, and dealing with D.C.'s alcoholic beverage regulatory maze. Â The D.C. Attorney General's Office for long stretches of time has been plagued by underfunding and understaffing. Once during oral argument on my motion to compel discovery responses from my opposing counsel at the then-named Corporation Counsel's Office, the federal judge proclaimed something along the lines of: "Don't you know you are dealing with a foreign government? I will permit ___ weeks additional time for a response to your discovery requests." Â Recently I learned that now short-lived D.C. attorney general Linda Singer has resigned as attorney general, being replaced in the interim by Mayor Fenty's general counsel Peter Nickles, who lives in rural Virginia. In trying to do t'ai chi battle with my opponents, it is important to know not only about my opposing lawyer, but also about their bosses and their office culture. If I were working at the attorney general's office, I might feel in a precarious position about my job posting and job security, until learning who takes the helm from the interim attorney general, and what the new attorney general's priorities will be. Those fearful of job security might be fearful of proceeding in any manner other than a conservative one. However, being public servants, government lawyers should proceed with the public interest in mind, rather than their own job security; how many people actually follow that approach? Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Criminal Defense at 00:00