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Associate Dean and Director, Government Law Center
Albany Law School Class of 1988

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of the 2002 Award for Excellence in Public Service
from the New York State Bar Association

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■ LAW JOURNAL PROFILE ■

Albany Law School's Salkin Is Honored For Public Service

BY JOHN CAHER



Patricia E. Salkin

IN WEIGHING her career options, Patricia E. Salkin looked for something that would give her a reason to get out of bed in the morning. The problem, according to associates at Albany Law School, is that she found something that so enthralls her that she never seems to sleep.

For a dozen years, Ms. Salkin has been the energetic engine that drives the school's Government Law Center, an adjunct established in 1978 to forge a tighter link between the only law school in New York's capital and public policymakers.

Its goal is to provide lawmakers with thorough, nonpartisan analysis. And thanks to Ms. Salkin, that goal is met, according to the New York State Bar Association, which honored the Law Center director this week with its 2002 Award for Excellence in Public Service.

Over the years, the Government Law Center has been an important source of information on elder law and policy, land use reform, public policy dispute resolution and other cutting-edge issues. It holds seminars, issues exhaustive reports and recently entered into an alliance with the City of Albany's new Citizens' Police Review Board. As such, it is the only academic institution in the nation playing an official role in police oversight. Its work has been praised by Republican Governor Pataki and Democratic Comptroller H. Carl McCall, who is seeking his party's support to challenge the Governor this fall.

"In my law school essay, I wrote that when my alarm clock goes off in the morning, I want to get up and work for the laws that govern all of our lives," Ms. Salkin said. "Most lawyers help people, but they help people for the most part one at a time. When you are working at the Government Law Center on the legal aspects of public policy reform, you are affecting the lives of thousands, if not millions. That's what makes me tick. That's the psychic reward that comes from doing the work we do."

Ms. Salkin's career has always centered on the public sector, and her return to her alma mater in 1990 was the completion of a circle.

As a student, Ms. Salkin worked for Representative Benjamin Gilman, R-Middletown, and with state Sena-

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tor Charles Cook, R-Delhi. She later worked for two state agencies, the Office of Rural Affairs and the Department of State, before coming back to Albany Law School as assistant director of the Law Center. She was later made director, and is also a professor and associate dean. While running the Government Law Center, Ms. Salkin, 37, teaches one of the nation's only law school courses on government ethics.

Information Broker

She views the Government Law Center as a "neutral information broker" in a town where seemingly nobody is neutral about anything.

"In a government town that has more than 1,000 registered lobbyists, what the Government Law Center can offer lawmakers and policymakers is access to comprehensive, neutral, unbiased information without a political agenda," Ms. Salkin said. "I think that is what sets us apart, particularly when we are doing projects, studies, reports, conferences on topics that are before the Legislature, the Governor's office or state agencies."

Thomas H. Sponsler, dean and president of Albany Law School, said "it is difficult to imagine anybody else more deserving" of the award than Ms. Salkin.

"All of Patty's very considerable energy has for years been devoted to matters of public service," Dean Sponsler said. "Her directorship of the Government Law Center ... has allowed her to have a positive impact on a myriad of public service activities."

Prior recipients of the award include Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau and now former Court of Appeals Judge Joseph W. Bellacosa. Previously, Ms. Salkin received the 1997 Hugh R. Pomeroy Award from the New York Planning Federation for Zoning Achievement and the 1998 Jefferson B. Fordham Award from the American Bar Association Section on State and Local Government Law.

Other Awards

Ms. Salkin is among many award recipients this week. Also receiving awards are:

- Former Chief Judge Lawrence H. Cooke, co-recipient of the Ruth G. Schapiro Memorial Award for contributions to women's concerns. Judge Cooke died last year.
- Kristin Booth Glen, dean of the City University of New York School of Law at Queens College, co-recipient of the Ruth G. Schapiro Award.
- Former Court of Appeals Judge Bellacosa, now dean at St. John's University School of Law, Stanley H. Fuld Award by the Commercial and Federal Litigation Section. Last year, the State Bar honored Judge Bellacosa with its Gold Medal Award, the highest honor the group bestows.
- Bernard B. Kerik, former New York City police commissioner, Award for Excellence in Police Contribution.
- Mary Jo White, former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District, Excellence in Prosecutorial Services.
- Kathryn M. Kase of Crane Greene & Parente in Albany, Charles F. Crimi Memorial Award for outstanding criminal defense advocacy.
- Supreme Court Justice Vincent E. Doyle Jr. the administrative judge for the Eighth Judicial District in Buffalo, Judicial Contributions to the Criminal Justice System.
- Peter Gerstenzang of Gerstenzang O'Hern Hickey & Gerstenzang in Albany, Special Recognition Award for Service to the Bar and Community.
- Myron Beldock of Beldock Levine & Hoffman LLP in Manhattan, Davis S. Michaels Memorial Award for Courageous Efforts in Promoting Integrity in the Criminal Justice System.
- Manuel D. Vargas of the New York State Defenders Association, Delivery of Legal Services.
- Ellen M. Yacknin of the Greater Upstate Legal Project in Rochester, Haywood Burns Memorial Award for civil rights advocacy.
- Arthur C. Helton, director of Peace and Conflict Studies and senior fellow for Refugee Studies and Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations in Manhattan, Award for Distinction in International Law and Affairs.
- Captain William "Harry" Thompson, Senior Court Officer Thomas Jurgens and Senior Court Officer Mitchel Wallace all will receive posthumous awards for sacrificing their lives while helping others during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.