

Gary Peters

By John C. Schlinker

Plato wrote that lawyers are “always in a hurry.” Some lawyers choose non-traditional careers to avoid the fast-paced work days of the legal profession. Not Gary Peters. Gary Peters is a hard-working, high-energy lawyer who has excelled in more than one non-traditional career since graduating from law school.

Peters has been a member of the State Bar of Michigan since 1989. A graduate of Wayne State University Law School (J.D. 1989), Alma College (B.A. Magna Cum Laude 1980, Phi Beta Kappa), and the University of Detroit (M.B.A. 1984). Peters has also taught Finance at Wayne State University and Strategic Management and Business Policy courses at Oakland University.

A lifelong resident of Oakland County, Peters is currently Commissioner of the Michigan Bureau of State Lottery. He is married to Colleen Ochoa and has three children: Gary Jr., Madeleine, and Alana.

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm appointed Peters to his current position effective April 9, 2003. As Lottery Commissioner, Gary Peters is the CEO of a \$1.6 billion business with 180 employees. The mission of the Michigan Lottery is to provide financial support to K–12 public education. Last year, the Lottery generated in excess of \$600 million for the state School Aid Fund. Peters is currently implementing new games and more efficient methods of delivering products in an effort to enhance the Lottery’s contribution to public education. For example, Michigan Lottery products are now found at horse racing tracks and at Class C liquor licensees.

Prior to becoming Lottery Commissioner, Peters served as a senior policy and financial analyst for the Michigan Department of Treasury, served two terms in the Michigan Senate, and was an accomplished financial



A legal education put to many uses

manager in the private sector. Peters was one of the youngest resident managers in company history when he became Vice President for Investments at Merrill Lynch, Inc. in Rochester Hills in 1989. Peters also served on arbitration panels for the National Association of Securities Dealers and the New York Stock Exchange.

Senator Peters served in the Michigan Senate from 1995 to 2002. He represented one of the state’s most diverse senate districts. A true microcosm of Michigan, Peters’ Oakland County district contained nearly every racial, ethnic, and religious group in Michigan. His senate district contained areas of great wealth and great poverty. Peters en-

joyed and celebrated the diversity of this complex constituency.

In the state senate, Peters was chosen by his colleagues to chair his party’s caucus. He also served as Vice Chair of the Finance, Education, Judiciary, and Natural Resources Committees. He was a member of the Michigan Law Revision Commission and served on the Michigan Sentencing Commission.

Peters led many successful legislative battles; he fought to ban directional slant oil drilling in the Great Lakes and supported many law enforcement initiatives. For example, after learning from police officers about the extreme degree of danger an officer encounters when dealing with criminals wearing body armor, Peters led the fight to criminalize the possession of body armor by convicted felons. Peters also wrote the law that initially established penalties for false threats of chemical and biological weapons such as anthrax—and did so before the horrific events of September 11, 2001.

His legal education assisted him greatly in his duties as a state senator. “Obviously, the ability to interpret and understand the implications of

particular legislative language was essential to my ability to effectively comprehend and foresee the impact of the legislation before the senate,” Peters said. “I was able to judge for myself what proposed legislation would or would not accomplish and how particular legislative language might advance my legislative goals. In my opinion, my legal education made me a more effective legislator in terms of proposing amendments to legislation and seeing the big picture of how a particular piece of bill fit in the grand scheme of Michigan law.”

His former senate colleagues describe Peters as an effective legislator and a lawyer who upholds the finest ideals of the State

Bar. Michigan Court of Appeals Judge Bill Schuette served with Peters in the Michigan Senate. Judge Schuette said, "Although Gary and I were from different political parties and had, at times, sharply different views on major issues of the day, I never questioned his integrity or his ability. Gary Peters is a fine representative of the State Bar." Senate Minority Leader Bob Emerson said, "Gary Peters is passionate about public service and an effective advocate for many issues."

For his many legislative accomplishments, Peters was recently awarded the prestigious "Champion of Justice" award by the Michigan Trial Lawyers Association. The Michigan Fraternal Order of Police named him "Public Servant of the Year" and the Michigan Dep-

uty Sheriffs Association presented him with their "Star Award." Peters was the Michigan Sierra Club's "Environmentalist of the Year" and received the "Outstanding Legislator Award" from the Michigan Association of School Psychologists.

Peters volunteered for military service as another opportunity to "give back" to his country. Currently, he holds a commission as a Lieutenant Commander and a Seabee Combat Warfare Specialist in the United States Naval Reserve. His reserve duty has in-

cluded time in the Persian Gulf supporting Operation Southern Watch, and he served overseas during increased military activity following the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Gary Peters' post-law school career has not taken a well traveled path. His strong commitment to public service, however, is in keeping with the most traditional and noblest undertakings of our profession. ◆

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