

Jenner & Block Partner Dawn Smalls Appointed to New York City Campaign Finance Board

News

March 30, 2023

On March 30, New York City Mayor Eric Adams announced the appointment of Partner Dawn Smalls to the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB), a nonpartisan, independent city agency. Dawn will work alongside four other members to lead the agency that administers one of the strongest, most effective campaign finance systems in the country.

“Dawn’s service represents the very best of the firm and continues our long tradition of public service,” said Managing Partners Katya Jestin and Randy Mehrberg. “Her experience across law, government, politics, and philanthropy will be an asset for the CFB and New York City.”

Dawn will maintain her practice while serving in the position.

Read the Mayor’s announcement:

Mayor Adams Announces Appointment of Dawn Smalls to Campaign Finance Board

March 30, 2023

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams today announced the appointment of Dawn Smalls to the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). The CFB is a nonpartisan, independent city agency that administers one of the strongest, most effective campaign finance systems in the country. Through its rigorous oversight and enforcement efforts, the CFB holds candidates accountable for using public funds responsibly. The CFB publishes detailed public information about money raised and spent in city elections by candidates and independent spenders. The board consists of five members – two mayoral appointees, two appointees from the speaker of the New York City Council, and a chair who is appointed by the mayor in consultation with the speaker – each of whom is appointed to five-year terms.

“Dawn Smalls is an exceptional attorney with a track record that highlights her incredible expertise in both law and politics,” said **Mayor Adams**. “Her service in two presidential administrations gives her a unique insight into government, and her addition to the Campaign Finance Board will

undoubtedly further the board's noble efforts to strengthen accountability in our city's campaign finance system. I am proud to announce Dawn's appointment, and I am confident she will help bring integrity to our city's elections."

"Dawn has been a trusted advisor and lawyer to political campaigns, presidential administrations, and private-sector clients," said **City Hall Chief Counsel Brendan McGuire**. "As a member of the Campaign Finance Board, she will call upon her vast public and private sector experience to strengthen the democratic process and to ensure that the board operates with integrity and fairness."

"As big money continues to have an outsized influence on elections, I am honored to join the Campaign Finance Board to oversee one of the strongest public financing systems in the country," said **CFB Board Member Dawn Smalls**. "I got to experience it firsthand as a candidate and know how the public financing of elections incentivizes candidates to spend more time speaking to people from the district they seek to represent and more time talking to a variety of constituents, rather than just those with deep pockets. This results in fairer, more democratic elections, and I am proud to bring that experience to the board. I also look forward to working with my fellow board members to engage and educate voters about city elections and candidates and advocate for legislative change to make voting what it should be: secure, efficient, and accessible to all.

"Dawn Smalls will be an exemplary member of the Campaign Finance Board, and we are looking forward to working together with her to continue to empower New Yorkers to make a greater impact in New York City's elections," said **CFB Chair Fredrick Schaffer**. "She is an accomplished legal professional with an impressive background in public service that will add great value to our board and the work that we do here at the CFB."

"We are thrilled to have Dawn Smalls joining our team here at the Campaign Finance Board. Dawn's professional accomplishments and her experience in our program make this appointment powerful in so many ways," said **CFB Executive Director Beth Rotman**. "As a former program participant, I know that she will continue to seek out ways that we can improve our robust campaign finance program."

"Dawn has all the credentials and knowledge of how the CFB should work to make her an ideal candidate," said **Betsy Gotbaum, former New York City Public Advocate**. "She is also very conscientious and will take her position seriously. She is just the type of person the city should have on the CFB."

"Dawn is an exceptional lawyer with a proven commitment to campaign finance reform," said **Russ Feingold, president, American Constitution Society (ACS); and former U.S. Senator**. "I was grateful for her leadership on ACS's board of directors, and I know she will bring invaluable expertise and experience to the New York City Campaign Finance Board."

“Anyone who has been fortunate enough to work with Dawn knows that she is a remarkable leader,” said **John Kowal, vice president for programs, Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law**. “In a career that includes prestigious roles in government, politics, philanthropy, and the practice of law, Dawn has exemplified the legal profession’s commitment to service in the public interest. Her diverse experience in politics at the national and local levels, along with her extensive experience on nonprofit boards and bar committees, make her an inspired choice to serve on the New York City Campaign Finance Board — the independent agency that maintains the city’s small donor public financing program, a successful reform that amplifies the voice of average New Yorkers in city elections and makes it easier for citizens from all walks of life to run for office.”

About Dawn Smalls

Dawn Smalls is a strategic advisor and multidisciplinary leader with experience across law, government, politics, and philanthropy. In her private practice, Smalls has fought for undocumented immigrants, victims of financial crime, and voters facing intimidation. Her knowledge, at the intersection of law and politics, comes from serving, first, in the Clinton administration as assistant to the White House chief of staff and as a liaison on policy and budget issues for the District of Columbia, and then in the Obama administration as the chief regulatory officer at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as HHS’ liaison to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget.

During the 2008 election cycle, Smalls served as a regional political director for the Hillary Clinton for America presidential campaign, covering six states during the primary, after which she joined then-U.S. Senator Barack Obama’s campaign for the general election as New York political director.

As a commissioner of the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics, Smalls provided oversight to the state agency tasked with ensuring that state elected officials and lobbyists comply with the state’s ethics and lobbying laws and regulations.

Previously, Smalls served as the secretary of the New York City Bar’s ethics committee. Smalls also worked for the Open Society Foundations and the Ford Foundation — two of the largest philanthropies in the world — managing approximately \$40 million of grants that promoted and increased civic engagement, political reform, and grassroots activism.

Smalls is a graduate of Boston University and Stanford Law School.

Press release courtesy of nyc.gov.

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