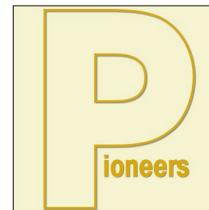
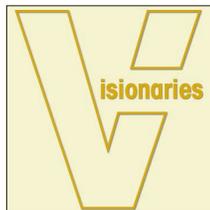


The  
**90**  
Greatest Washington Lawyers  
of the Last 30 Years

30th Anniversary  
Special Issue



It would have been fairly simple to create a 30th anniversary issue that glanced over the biggest events in the Washington legal community since our newspaper was founded in 1978. Grab a few of the bound volumes, search the electronic archives, find a bunch of old pictures, and voila! Instant issue.



Instead, we embarked upon a far more challenging enterprise. Late last year, we decided to try to name the lawyers who had the greatest impact on the Washington legal community over the last 30 years.

We divided our task into three parts. The editors selected 30 lawyers whose foresight and hard work have changed the business of law in Washington. These are our visionaries. We also picked 30 lawyers whose community and public service has set an example that other D.C. lawyers should follow. These are our champions.

In addition, we're remembering 30 pioneers—advocates who have passed away since 1978, but whose contribution to busi-

ness and the community made an indelible impact on the way law in Washington is practiced today.

Earlier this year, we asked readers for their suggestions, and hundreds of names flowed into our newsroom. We also relied heavily upon our own reporting and institutional knowledge to make the final choices.

From the beginning, we made a decision to concentrate on the private bar, public-interest organizations, and career government attorneys. We deliberately exempted high government officials (Supreme Court justices and attorneys general, for instance) from our list—unless their contributions had a specific impact on Washington's legal community. Other than that, the qualification for inclusion was a law degree and exceptional service during the 30 years that we have published.

—DAVID BROWN, EDITOR IN CHIEF & PUBLISHER

# Robert Wilkins



Thirty years ago in Muncie, Ind., Robert Wilkins recalls watching the struggles of his single-parent mom and realizing that what he wanted most in life was “a good job.”

Well, most people say Wilkins has done a great job—even at some onerous tasks. Wilkins, 44, has built a reputation as a cutting-edge litigator and one of the best criminal defense lawyers in the city, first as special litigation chief for the D.C. Public Defender Service, where he helped reform the D.C. sentencing code. For the past six years, he’s been a partner at Venable, where he’s led the fight to recover \$1 billion on behalf of Enron’s creditors.

But Wilkins may be best known for the jobs he’s taken on for personal reasons: A precedent-setting fight against racial profiling in Maryland, and championing the National Museum of African American History and Culture. President George W. Bush gave final approval to the museum on Dec. 16, 2003, with Wilkins attending the ceremony in the Oval Office.

His transition from working as a public defender wasn’t all that difficult, he says: “What translates well is you have to be willing to fight and be innovative, and come up with a way to tell your story in a way that will be understood. Even if it seems that the law is against you, the govern-



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ment is against you, and the judge is against you, you still need to go in and give them everything you have.” —MICHAEL J. ZUCKERMAN

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