



Marlan Wilbanks

SAFEGUARDING WHISTLE-BLOWERS AND SURVIVORS THROUGH LAW

UGA School of Law alumnus Marlan B. Wilbanks (J.D.'86) has done just as much to protect whistle-blowers as he has done to find justice for child abuse survivors.

The Double Dawg helped establish the Wilbanks Child Endangerment and Sexual Exploitation Clinic at the law school to not only help survivors of child sexual abuse and their families but to allow law students an opportunity to work on cases that give them a real world perspective.

"It is the first law school clinic [in the nation] that's dedicated exclusively to the representation of victims of child sexual abuse. ... It's been an honor and a privilege to watch how that it's not only helped victims and their families, but also the students grow," Wilbanks said.

The clinic was established in 2016, after the passage of Georgia's Hidden Predator Act, which created a two-year window to allow child sexual abuse survivors to bring forth civil cases that were previously barred under a statute of limitations.

Wilbanks emphasized the importance of the clinic in bringing about tangible actions for prevalent issues in today's society. "It's not a very popular subject dealing with the wreckage of child sex abuse. Everybody wants to say: 'Let's stop sex trafficking, and we're against sex trafficking. We're against abuse.' But who's going to step forward and handle the wreckage after it happens?"

Now that the Hidden Predator Act's two-year window has passed, Wilbanks has been pushing the Georgia General Assembly to pass another law that would help child abuse survivors in seeking justice and being able to tell their stories. The Wilbanks CEASE Clinic has also begun researching laws around the United States to find other solutions and remedies to protect children in Georgia.

Wilbanks is pushing for a renewal of the Hidden Predator Act because he believes it can help sexual abuse survivors who have not already come forward. "Georgia's laws are in the bottom five as far as protecting children in the United States, and Atlanta is the center of the sex trafficking industry in the United States."

He said his passion for law and the clinic are "about creating an opportunity to help hundreds of thousands more who don't have a voice for themselves or can't afford a lawyer or those who don't know what their rights are."

Wilbanks believes that access to justice is a large part of the healing process for survivors and denying it can add to their ongoing trauma.

"[My mother] wasn't able to tell others about what happened to her until she was in her mid-50s. That's pretty typical. So to tell those people that you don't have a right to any justice ... Georgia's laws are re-victimizing them," Wilbanks said.

As a partner at Wilbanks & Gouinlock, a firm he has been part of since graduating law school, Wilbanks said his favorite part is being able to help people every day and learn about a range of industries from medical care to defense contracting. His cases have resulted in American taxpayers and his clients recovering over \$3 billion from companies that have defrauded the government. As a *qui tam* lawyer, he says he focuses on "catching people who are intentionally stealing from the government."

He added that his day-to-day work relates to his reason for starting the Wilbanks CEASE Clinic. "We're talking about where people intentionally hurt children, and where entities and other people intentionally hide and conceal that. So I'm after, not the folks with the gray hats, but the ones with the black hats."

Wilbanks draws a lot of inspiration from his mother, who taught him to not be "afraid to fight hard for the things you believe in," a tenet he is mindful of every day.

He says the success of the clinic depends on today's law students. "I'm so happy and proud that law students are being influenced by what we're doing at the clinic. That's who the leaders of tomorrow are and who I want to influence. I want to encourage them to follow their passions, to get involved and help people," he said.

—Mauli Desai

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Luis Aguilar

MAKING STRIDES IN LAW AND CONTRIBUTING THROUGH PUBLIC SERVICE



Six weeks after Luis A. Aguilar (J.D.'79) became a commissioner on the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in 2008, the recession hit when Lehman Brothers went into bankruptcy and the stock market crashed. A short time later one of the largest financial frauds in U.S. history – the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme – was exposed.

Aguilar served as a commissioner from 2008 to 2015 and became one of the SEC's longest-serving members and one of only three commissioners to be nominated by two U.S. presidents from two different political parties. Though in his early days at the SEC, at the onset of the Great Recession, he did not think he would be a commissioner for long as there were credible stories that the SEC would cease to operate after the crash and its various functions would be distributed to other agencies.

"An event like the Great Recession is something that, fortunately, happens rarely. It wasn't something being predicted," Aguilar said.

The former commissioner compared the market crash to another rarity. "It was almost like a black swan event. ... Black swans were once thought to be rare, that they didn't exist, of course, until they found some. In 2008 various factors converged that nearly took the nation to another Great Depression, like the country experienced in the 1920s and 1930s."

Aguilar notes that the recession was a tragedy that resulted in many people losing their jobs and homes, and he recognized that he was "fortunate to find [himself] at one of the agencies that could at least make an attempt to help right the ship." In the aftermath of the criticism of the SEC following the market crash, the SEC entered into one of its most active periods in its history and worked to restore confidence and accountability in itself and in the capital markets.

First a Bush appointee and then an Obama appointee, Aguilar said he was the only commissioner who was at the SEC

during the 2008 crash who Obama asked to stay on at the SEC. He credits this to his background in securities law and his experience representing many public and private companies, and a variety of SEC-regulated entities such as mutual funds, investment advisers and broker-dealers, among others.

When asked why he chose to stay at the SEC for more than seven years, Aguilar said he had "a sense of obligation to the United States," ever since he emigrated here as child from Cuba.

"I came to this country when I was six and my brother was nine. We were separated from our parents for various years. This country and the generosity of the American people kept me fed, kept me clothed and provided me a good, solid education. So when you're asked to give back with some sort of public service, you do feel an obligation to do that. And that's why I said yes the first time to President Bush, and that's why I said yes the second time to President Obama," he added.

Aguilar has many fond memories of his time at UGA and his professors and fellow students. During law school, Aguilar served as a notes editor for the *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*. He also translated text from Spanish to English on the Mexican penal system for former U.S. Secretary of State – then a law school faculty member – Dean Rusk, whose mentorship he remembers to this day. Aguilar was also grateful for the interest other professors showed in him and said he often thinks of Professors Ellen Jordan and Gabriel Wilner, both of whom have passed.

"Different times in your life, different times in your career, you're fortunate enough to come across the right person, at the right time, to give you advice, guidance and support. I've been fortunate to have run into quite a few of them in my life. Many of them were at the UGA law school," he said.

—Mauli Desai

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Kate Jensen

FINDING A HOME THROUGH THE UGA SCHOOL OF LAW

When law school alumna Kate L. Jensen (J.D.'10) looks back at her time at the UGA School of Law she credits it with almost everything from her current job to her current friend group, and even her mentors.

While studying, Jensen was part of the Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot team led by Dean Peter B. “Bo” Rutledge. The team traveled to Vienna, Austria, for the international competition and Jensen recalls the trip as one of her most memorable parts of law school.

She also served as a research assistant for Hosch Professor Lori A. Ringhand, a teaching assistant for Georgia Athletic Association Professor David E. Shipley and a member of the *Georgia Law Review*.

Now, Jensen is an associate as well as a registered lobbyist at Steptoe & Johnson in Washington, D.C., where she specializes in financial services policy and regulatory compliance.

“I think my favorite part is the advocacy piece, like in litigation when you get to stand up in the courtroom, make your argument and then respond to what opposing counsel is telling you. We get to do that piece without going through discovery,” she said of her job. “We go directly to the decision-makers with our case and educate them on our issues. ... When you see somebody really understand and then nod their head in agreement with what you’re suggesting in terms of a policy, that’s definitely the best part.”

Jensen said the general negativity surrounding D.C. and the government is challenging. However, she chooses to focus on the positives and day-to-day matters, saying she takes pride in knowing “consensus between different interests happens all the time.”

In the midst of her tenure at Steptoe & Johnson, Jensen served as a judicial clerk for U.S. District Court Judge Richard W. Story (J.D.’78) from 2012 to 2014.

Jensen said Story is “one of the most thoughtful, balanced thinkers” she has “ever seen, lawyer or non-lawyer. He has an amazing ability to really step back, consider all sides and



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in that process treat everyone involved fairly and with respect. He’s how you want everyone in the legal profession to be. He’s the ultimate model of what a judge should be, and certainly what we should all aspire to in the practice of law.”

She shared that Story places a lot of confidence in his clerks and he gives them a lot of independence. “It’s very much a collaborative process with him though ... so it is a great learning experience and it makes you have a tremendous sense of pride in what you’re contributing to the chambers and to the judge’s work.”

Jensen said her law firm was the “biggest fan” of her clerkship. She added that the experience taught her the importance of a balanced perspective and has made her a better lawyer-lobbyist.

Crediting her current network of friends and her career to the School of Law, she said that her 30 closest friends are all School of Law graduates. “I feel like my time at Georgia really prepared me to get the job I have and to be successful at the firm over the last eight and a half years.”

She said her experience at UGA was “priceless” and due to the “reasonable” cost of her legal education, she feels she was not tied to a career path or “saddled with an insane amount of debt.” This has inspired her to donate to the Law School Fund, mentor a law student and serve on the Law School Association Council as secretary.

“That feeling – that personal connection – whenever you contribute to the school is what makes it worth it. I will support Georgia Law for the rest of my life,” she said.

—Maui Desai