

Exploring Environmental and Public Interest Careers at AG Offices

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Attorney General Dana Nessel *Michigan Attorney General*

Attorney General Dana Nessel is a former criminal prosecutor and civil rights attorney who has served as Michigan's Attorney General since January 2019. Since taking office, Attorney General Nessel has been a champion of the state's most important resource – its Great Lakes. Her environmental protection division is actively fighting to ensure clean air, water and energy for Michigan's residents so that our most valuable assets are preserved for generations to come. She has also joined the battle to combat the largest public health crisis in the nation – prescription drug addiction — and to stem the tide of Michigan's biggest environmental crisis in decades – PFAS contamination.

As the State's Chief Law Enforcement Officer, Attorney General Nessel's work has included continuing the Department's criminal investigations into the Flint Water Crisis and sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. And, she has created a Conviction Integrity Unit to investigate claims of innocence so that even when we prosecute the state's most heinous crimes, we can ensure the public's trust in our criminal justice system.

A graduate of the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Law School, Attorney General Nessel lives in southeast Michigan with her wife, Alanna Maguire, and her twin sons, Alex and Zach.

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Andrew Armstrong *Chief, Environmental Bureau, Office of the Illinois Attorney General*

Andrew Armstrong is Chief of the Springfield Environmental Bureau of the Illinois Attorney General's Office, supervising civil enforcement of state and federal environmental laws and regulations on behalf of the State of Illinois. He previously worked as an attorney for the Environmental Law & Policy Center and as an Assistant Attorney General in the Chicago Environmental Bureau of the Illinois Attorney General's Office. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (B.A. 1999) and the Northwestern University School of Law (J.D. 2004).

Gavin McCabe

Assistant Attorney General, New York State Office of Attorney General

Gavin G. McCabe is an Assistant Attorney General in the Environmental Protection Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's Office. In that position, he works on a broad range of matters including multi-state climate change and clean energy matters on behalf of the Attorney General and enforcement and defensive cases in state and federal courts on behalf of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Department of Health. He has been the lead attorney for New York on multistate actions challenging federal rollback of vehicle greenhouse gas and fuel economy standards and preemption of state standards, as well as leading multistate coalitions of states, municipalities and NGOs in commenting on and litigating in opposition to U.S. EPA's efforts to limit the use of scientific evidence in agency decision-making and to devalue benefits of pollution protection in setting Clean Air Act standards.

Prior to joining the New York AG's Office in 2018, Mr. McCabe worked for eighteen years in the Natural Resources Law Section of the California Attorney General's Office. For his final six years in California Mr. McCabe served as a Supervising Deputy Attorney General, managing a team of lawyers providing advice to and litigating on behalf of California's environmental and resource protection agencies. Prior to assuming a management role, Mr. McCabe worked for twelve years as a line DAG, litigating state and federal air, water, endangered species, forestry and hazardous waste matters, including successfully defending many aspects of California's regulatory programs to address climate change, such as California's cap and trade program and its first ever vehicle greenhouse gas emission standards. Mr. McCabe also led state efforts in the support of U.S. EPA's authority to promulgate federal vehicle greenhouse gas emission standards, including presenting oral argument in *Coalition for Responsible Regulation v. EPA*, the landmark 2012 D.C. Circuit case upholding EPA's authority.

Mr. McCabe began his legal career as an associate in the litigation department of a large law firm in San Francisco and then worked for several years as an Assistant Regional Counsel in U.S. EPA's Region 9 Office in San Francisco, handling enforcement actions under the Clean Air Act, CERCLA, RCRA, FIFRA, TSCA and EPCRA. He is a graduate of Yale University and the Georgetown University Law Center.

Liza Roberson-Young

Public Interest Counsel, Office of the Illinois Attorney General

Liza Roberson-Young is Public Interest Counsel for Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul. In that capacity, she coordinates the office's federal advocacy and works on state policy issues affecting the public interest. Before joining the AG's office, she worked for the Illinois Senate, where she was lead counsel for the Senate Judiciary and Labor Committees and the Senate Task Force on Sexual Harassment. She was also an associate at Sidley Austin LLP and a staff clerk for the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and its Law School.

Polly Synk

First Assistant, Environment, Natural Resource and Agriculture Division, Michigan Department of Attorney General

Polly A. Synk is an Assistant Attorney General working for Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel in the area of environmental law. She serves as the First Assistant in the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Division (ENRA), which represents the State of Michigan's agencies charged with protection and management of natural resources and the environment. Ms. Synk assists with management of the Division's 20 attorneys and acts as legal counsel for the State in numerous statutory and regulatory programs, including solid and hazardous waste regulation and cleanups, wetlands violations, groundwater and surface water discharges, bankruptcies involving sites of environmental concern, and natural resource damages. In her work for the Attorney General, Ms. Synk has represented the State of Michigan in high-profile negotiations and litigation involving major corporations, in which she has secured settlements in the hundreds of millions of dollars in damages and costs, in addition to required cleanup actions valued at over \$1 billion.

Currently, Ms. Synk serves as lead counsel for Attorney General Nessel's PFAS Litigation Project. The PFAS project includes multiple lawsuits against manufacturers and users of PFAS for costs and damages related to PFAS released into Michigan's environment, using attorneys in the department and assisted by a team of Special Assistant Attorneys General brought on board for the project. In addition to those responsibilities, she was also appointed by Attorney General Nessel to the Attorney General's Opinion Review Board, a panel of senior attorneys who oversee preparation and publication of formal legal opinions issued by the Attorney General.

Ms. Synk graduated from the University of Michigan Law School, where she participated in an on-campus "environmental job talk" that led to a summer internship with the Michigan Attorney General in the ENRA Division. After graduating, she practiced environmental law with a private law firm in Michigan but returned to the ENRA Division after a few years, and has been with the Attorney General working on behalf of the environment and the people of the State of Michigan ever since. Ms. Synk's undergraduate degree is also from the University of Michigan. Prior to attending law school, Ms. Synk worked on Capitol Hill in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate for several years before coming back to Ann Arbor for law school.