

Stephen L. Kass

Retired Counsel

Co-Director, Environmental Practice Group



contact

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Legal matters in the environmental field often entail multifaceted issues and interests. I try to take an informed and intelligent approach to those issues and to consider the goals not only of our client but of the regulators and adversaries with whom we will be dealing. I collaborate closely with our client throughout our representation and work with clients as a team to achieve our client's goals through the procedures and pathways that we jointly identify.

Widely recognized as one of the premier environmental and land-use attorneys in the nation, Stephen Kass combines the roles of litigator, advisor and draftsman to help clients navigate an extensive array of issues that arise in their matters.

Steve advises and works closely with clients and consultants on environmental impact statements, often on major projects in the New York metropolitan area. He advises private, public, and non-profit entities in corporate transactions, project permitting, administrative proceedings, hazardous substances claims and regulations, landmarking and real property transfers. He also represents companies involved in energy generation issues and has written extensively on international environmental issues.

The environmental legal arena involves balancing myriad complex and at times competing factors, including client economic goals, public health and safety concerns, government oversight, consumer preferences, human rights, and economic and environmental justice issues. Steve finds it gratifying to work at the

convergence of all these dynamics and to help clients navigate these complex issues in ways that realize the clients' goals while satisfying the public interest in fair and effective environmental regulation.

Steve's corporate clients turn to him to help them address concerns about how climate change will affect their businesses and commercial objectives. His governmental clients often request his guidance in completing priority projects in ways that don't inspire subsequent litigation (or that litigation, if brought, is successful for his clients). Community groups rely on him to help them ensure that environmentally sensitive areas are effectively protected.

With a particular interest in crafting and reviewing complex environmental impact statements, Steve guides organizations in issues relating to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and environmental policies affecting the New York region. These documents are often prepared in the context of regional, land use, and transportation planning challenges, as well as in climate-related mitigation and adaptation issues.

Steve has written hundreds of published articles, reports, and other professional pieces about environmental law-related topics. He has written a regular column in the New York Law Journal since 1986 and has also co-authored three books. Steve has also served as an adjunct professor and lecturer at Brooklyn Law School, Pace Law School, NYU's Center for Global Affairs, Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and Hunter College. He has chaired many New York City Bar Association committees and task forces (including International Environmental Law, Climate Adaptation, Downtown Redevelopment Following 9/11, Council on International Affairs, Consumer Affairs, International Human Rights) and currently chairs the City Bar Association's Task Force on the Rule of Law. He previously served as a member of the Association's Executive Committee and as its Vice-President in 1985. He is an Emeritus Director of Human Rights Watch, a Director (and former chair) of the National Center for Law & Economic Justice and a member of other non-profit boards concerned with environmental justice.

Experience

Steve has, since 1972, represented a wide range of corporate, governmental and non-profit clients in environmental matters. A partial listing of past and present clients includes: National Broadcasting Company, Related Housing, Julien J. Studley, Inc., United Water Resources, Inc., Gerald Metals, Inc., Levco Metals, Iscar Ltd., AWT-Chemfix Joint Venture, First National Bank of Chicago, First City Investors, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, New York Presbyterian Hospital, Steinway Musical Properties, Inc., Ferry Point Partners, Exco, Inc., Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Carnegie Hall, the YMCA of New York City, Battery Park City Authority, City of White Plains, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, New York City Convention Center Development Corporation, New York City Transit Authority, New York State Energy Resource and Development Authority, New York State Housing Finance Agency, New York State Urban Development Corporation (Empire State Development Corporation), Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, New York Power Authority, Long Island Power Authority, Rochester Convention Center Development Corporation, Roosevelt Island Development Corporation, Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, Town of Southampton, Village of Larchmont, Village of North Tarrytown, Village of Pelham, Westchester County Board of Legislators, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations and numerous environmental and non-profit organizations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters of New York State, and Human Rights Watch.

Other Professional Activities

- **International Affairs:** Human Rights Watch (Board of Directors, 1985-2005; Emeritus Director, 2005-Present; Chair, Policy Committee; Chair, Americas Advisory Committee); Council on Foreign Relations (Latin America Study Group, Cuba Study Group, Energy and the Environment Study Group, Economic Integration in Americas Study Group)
- **Legal Services:** Founder, Executive Director and Chair of Board of Trustees, Community Law Offices (now the Volunteer Division of Legal Aid Society); Board of Directors, National Center for Law and Economic Justice (Chair, 1989-99); Board of Directors, Municipal Employees Legal Services Fund (Chair, 1974-76); Board of Directors, Community Action for Legal Services (1973-76); Board of Directors, The Legal Aid Society (1976-82)

- **New York Law Journal:** Regular Column on "Environmental Law" and "International Environmental Law" (1986-present)

Teaching

- Adjunct Professor (International Environmental Law), Brooklyn Law School (2004-Present)
- Adjunct Professor (Climate Change and Human Rights), NYU/SCPS (Center on Global Affairs) (2012-present)
- Adjunct Professor (Climate Change Policy) Columbia School of International and Public Affairs (2013)
- Adjunct Professor (International Environmental Law), Pace University Law School (1998-2005)
- Adjunct Professor (Historic Preservation Law), Pace University Law School (1990-92)
- Lecturer, Environmental Law and Policy, State University of New York at Purchase (1978-80)

Outside the Office

In addition to spending time with my children and grandchildren, I kayak, play tennis, enjoy nature, read a variety of genres, travel and, with my wife's guidance, continue to learn and contribute to our family and community.

Admissions

Bar Admissions

New York

Court Admissions

U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York

U.S. Supreme Court

Affiliations

Member, Association of the Bar of the City of New York

Vice President (1985-86)

Chair, Task Force on Legal Problems of Climate Adaptation (2012-2016)

Chair, Committee on International Human Rights (2009-2012)

Chair, Special Committee on Consumer Affairs (1969-74)

Chair, Committee on Inter-American Affairs (1978-81)

Chair, Nominating Committee (1982)

Chair, Council on International Affairs (1986-89)

Chair, Special Committee on International Environmental Law (1991-94)

Chair, Committee on Social Welfare Law (1995-98)

Chair, Special Task Force on Downtown Redevelopment (2001-2002)

Member, Executive Committee (1974-78)

Member, Committee on Legal Assistance (1969-72)

Member, Ad Hoc Anti-Poverty Committee (1970-75)

Member, Committee on Pro Bono Obligations (1978-80)

Member, Special Committee on Drug Laws (1986-97)

Member, Committee on International Human Rights (1990-93)

Member, Committee on International Law (1994-95)

Member, Task Force on National Security and Rule of Law (2009-2019)

Member, Nominating Committee (1999)

Member, Committee on Civil Rights (2005-07)

Member, New York State Bar Association

Chair, Committee on Environmental Litigation, Section on Commercial and Federal Litigation (1994-98)

Member, Section on Environmental Law (since 1986)

Member, Special Committee on Public Interest Law (1975-77)

Chair, Special Committee on Legal Services Delivery (1974)
Member, House of Delegates (1978-79)
Member, American Bar Association
Member, Section on Housing and Urban Development
Member, Section on Natural Resources, Energy and Environment
Member, ABA Journal Advisory Board (1973-78)

Education

Harvard Law School (LLB, *cum laude*, 1964)
Yale University (BA, *magna cum laude*, 1961)

Awards/Honors

The Best Lawyers in America®, 2006-2024
Super Lawyers®, 2006-2023,
Chambers USA, 2011-2014
AV® Preeminent™ rated by Martindale-Hubbell®
Fellow, American College of Environmental Lawyers