

DC Bar Race In Spotlight As Bondi's Brother Seeks Top Role

By **Alison Knezevich**

Law360 (April 15, 2025, 4:36 PM EDT) -- The D.C. Bar's annual election doesn't usually generate much attention. In 2024, fewer than 9% of eligible attorneys cast ballots.

But this year, the contest has grabbed headlines and sparked discussion and social media posts by lawyers around the country as the brother of U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi seeks to lead the nation's largest mandatory bar.

Vying for the position of president-elect are Brad Bondi, who co-chairs the investigations and white collar defense practice at Paul Hasting LLP, and employment attorney Diane Seltzer, a solo practitioner and principal of the Seltzer Law Firm.

Voting kicked off Tuesday and runs until June 4. The president-elect will succeed Sadina Montani of Crowell & Moring LLP, who **won last year's election** and is set to become president July 1, taking over for **current President** Shaun Snyder of the National Association of State Treasurers.

The D.C. Bar represents roughly 119,000 members located in every U.S. state and more than 80 countries, according to the organization.

Critics of Bondi's candidacy fear what his ties to President Donald Trump's administration would mean for bar members as Trump roils the legal community with executive orders and other actions **targeting law firms and attorneys**. For instance, in a **sweeping memo** in March, Trump directed the attorney general to seek sanctions against lawyers and firms "who engage in frivolous, unreasonable, and vexatious litigation against the United States" and matters before federal agencies.

In a more than four-minute video posted to Instagram on Monday, conservative lawyer and Trump critic George Conway urged attorneys to vote against Bondi, arguing that under the candidate's sister, the U.S. Department of Justice "is engaged in a full-scale assault on our Constitution and on the rule of law."

Conway called Brad Bondi "a fine and honorable professional," but said he "isn't the right person to lead the D.C. Bar at this time."

"Not now; not at this extraordinarily perilous moment for our legal system," said Conway, who is not a member of the D.C. Bar.



Brad Bondi



Diane Seltzer

In a recent interview with Law360 Pulse, Brad Bondi, 51, said his focus is "on unifying our diverse membership and improving services, not on politics," adding that he has never "let personal ties dictate my professional decisions."

"I have not talked to anyone in the administration about my decision to run for the president-elect of the bar, and that includes my sister," Bondi said.

Justice Department spokespersons for Pam Bondi did not respond to a request for comment for this story.

In addition to bar president, there are also races for treasurer-elect and for five seats on the 23-member Board of Governors, as well as for the American Bar Association House of Delegates. The two treasurer candidates are Alicia Long, a top deputy to interim D.C. U.S. Attorney Ed Martin, and Amanda Molina, an in-house attorney for Microsoft.

Brad Bondi told Law360 Pulse that his close friend and Paul Hastings colleague Traci Zeller suggested he run for bar president before she died this past August.

Last spring, he said, Zeller complained about a lack of continuing legal education offerings by the D.C. Bar. In addition, he said, while preparing for a major case, some colleagues encountered issues with obtaining certificates of good standing in D.C., which are required for pro hac vice admissions that let an attorney participate in a jurisdiction in which they are not licensed to practice. While other jurisdictions were quick in returning the certificates, Bondi said, "the D.C. Bar was somewhat slow, and then charged a fee for it."

"That experience ... last spring prompted my colleague Traci to say, 'You should run for bar president,'" said Bondi, who last year established a memorial award in Zeller's honor at the University of Virginia School of Law, her alma mater.

If elected, Bondi said, he would work to boost member benefits, including providing free, on-demand continuing legal education, expanding pro bono opportunities and raising awareness of the ethics hotline. He said he also thinks the D.C. Bar should streamline the process for obtaining certificates of good standing and provide them to members at no cost.

Bondi joined Paul Hastings in 2023 from Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP and frequently handles high-profile matters; he has represented clients such as Tesla and Nikola Corp. founder Trevor Milton. He graduated from the University of Florida's Levin College of Law and earned a master of laws from the Georgetown University Law Center.

He has taught at Georgetown and George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School, and been active with the D.C. Bar's Corporation, Finance and Securities Law Community, including serving on its Steering Committee. Bondi is also involved in a number of nonprofit organizations, and endowed a diversity and inclusion scholarship fund at the University of Florida's law school.

Among the concerns raised in social media posts about this year's race is that elected bar leaders could influence the D.C. attorney discipline system, where several lawyers have faced ethics charges in recent years over claims that they helped Trump try to overturn results of the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

While the D.C. Bar's Board of Governors recommends members of the Board on Professional Responsibility, a disciplinary panel appointed by the D.C. Court of Appeals, the bar itself does not handle complaints about lawyers or prosecute disciplinary cases, D.C. Bar CEO Bob Spagnoletti told Law360 Pulse. That is done by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel, and the appeals court has final say on attorney discipline in Washington.

"The D.C. Bar has no control over, or insight into, the workings of the disciplinary system," Spagnoletti said.

Seltzer, Bondi's opponent, said bar members need support "during this time of chaos." If elected, she said, she would listen to members to understand how they can best "feel supported when the rule of law is being challenged and decimated by the government at this point."

"To me, upholding the rule of law is absolutely the No. 1 priority," she said in an interview with Law360 Pulse.

Seltzer, 57, also said she's interested in facilitating discussions on how different generations can best collaborate in the legal workplace.

"What does that look like when you've got a Gen Z attorney working with a Boomer, and they have different ideas about what work should look like?" she said.

Seltzer opened her law firm in 1997 and handles a range of employment law matters. She has taught at American University's Washington College of Law, where she earned her law degree, and been involved in various community causes, including the National Capital 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb & 5K Walk.

A current member of the Executive Committee of the D.C. Bar's Board of Governors and a former board secretary, Seltzer has long taught CLE classes and previously chaired the Bar's CLE Committee. She's also served on Bar committees focused on strategic planning, budget and other areas.

That extensive involvement makes her the "superior candidate," said Patrick McGlone, who is among a long list of former D.C. Bar presidents who have endorsed Seltzer.

"She'll know what issues come to the board, and she'll know the dynamic on the board," McGlone said, describing Seltzer as engaged, thoughtful and committed.

Seltzer also has the backing of a half-dozen voluntary bar associations, including the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of the Greater Washington, D.C. Area, the Women's Bar Association of D.C. and the Washington Council of Lawyers, which promotes pro bono service and public interest law.

Bondi's campaign website, meanwhile, includes an open letter from dozens of lawyers recognizing his "character, professionalism, and integrity." His supporters say that criticism based on his sister's actions is unfair.

"Every person should be judged on their own merits," said Christy Goldsmith Romero, a member of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission who worked with Brad Bondi at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and taught with him at Georgetown Law.

Goldsmith Romero described Bondi as compassionate and kind, telling Law360 that he cares deeply about lawyers and law students "getting the support they need."

Asked his opinion of the Trump administration's recent actions against law firms, Bondi said the D.C. Bar "has a long and well-established policy of not intervening in political issues." He noted that the organization has not weighed in with an official statement.

"It's not a political organization," Bondi said. "It's a nonpartisan organization. The individual views of the elected members of the bar have no relevance. The bar must stay a nonpartisan, nonpolitical organization."

--Editing by Alanna Weissman.