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## Jack Delaney, Bridge Between Public and Private Sectors

2010-07-30

We are saddened to announce the death of our longtime colleague and partner, John W. (Jack) Delaney. Mr. Delaney, who left a lasting legacy at the intersection of law, business and politics, died July 30, 2010 at his home in Dedham, following a long, courageous battle with cancer. He was 67.

Mourning the loss of a friend, Congressman Barney Frank noted that for four decades, “Jack Delaney was one of the most important and effective bridges in Massachusetts between the business world and the world of government and politics.”

“He was one of the people I’ve most admired,” Congressman Frank continued, “in creating a civilized climate for political-economic dialogue.”

Paul Guzzi, former Secretary of State of the Commonwealth and current President of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, echoed Congressman Frank: “Jack was a gentleman’s gentleman; a leader who cared deeply about our community. Jack was a friend and advisor to me and many others.”

Mr. Delaney, whose counsel was sought by differing constituencies throughout his career, was renowned for his ability to overcome partisan conflict.

“Jack was a Republican and a damn good one,” former Governor Michael Dukakis said of his Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Business Regulation. “We worked together on lots of good things, and he cared deeply about the Commonwealth. We have too few people these days who felt, as he did, that partisanship often had nothing to do with the public interest. He is going to be sorely missed.”

Mr. Delaney’s approach to resolving difficult problems was simple. “People who talk to each other get to know each other, and can solve problems,” he explained in a speech delivered at a Business to Business Exposition sponsored by the North Shore Chamber of Commerce in 1986, as reported by the Salem News. “They get in the same room and they feel they’re just folks. Everybody’s stuck in the same traffic jam, everybody wants to clean up the dump, everybody wants to clean the harbor.”

Mr. Delaney operated at the highest levels of the state’s legal, business and political worlds. He served on the Massachusetts Business Roundtable in the 1980’s, which brought together chief

executives to deal with public problems. He was a current member of the “Breakfast Group” headed by real estate executive Kevin Phelan, which includes some of Boston’s most influential business, political, media, and civic leaders.

“When I think of the lawyers of great integrity and good judgment in the state,” lauded Honorable Sandra Lynch, Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and fellow member of the Breakfast Group, “Jack’s name is in the group at the top of the list. He has been a leader. His ability to stay calm in the midst of turmoil around him and not have it affect his thinking was noteworthy. He was widely respected and has been a first class lawyer and public citizen.”

In the 1980’s, Mr. Delaney was secretary and coordinator for the “Vault,” a private committee of Boston’s top business leaders that met for many years to address public policy issues. Retired WilmerHale partner, Harold Hestnes, who was chairman of the Vault, said that Mr. Delaney should be remembered for his extraordinarily high ethical standards. “He was opposed in every way possible to ‘pay for play’ politics,” Mr. Hestnes said this week.

Mr. Delaney was born and raised in West Springfield, Massachusetts, where, at the age of only 24, he was elected a Town Meeting Member and then Town Meeting Moderator at 29.

He graduated from Harvard College and Harvard Law School. He launched his career in public service as a staff assistant to U.S. Senator Leverett Saltonstall while still an undergraduate. After clerking for Superior Court Chief Justice Joseph G. Tauro, Mr. Delaney rose rapidly to top positions in state government.

He served as a deputy assistant under Attorney General Elliot Richardson, who, along with Senator Saltonstall, was one of Mr. Delaney’s most influential mentors.

As legislative assistant to Governor Francis W. Sargent, Mr. Delaney was responsible for evaluating all bills passed by the Legislature and recommending action on them to the Governor. Mr. Delaney was one of the few high-level appointees of the Sargent administration retained by Governor Dukakis when he took office in 1975.

In 1976, Mr. Delaney left state government to become Executive Director of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, a City Hall watchdog. In a column entitled “Delaney Loss Blow to State,” Boston Globe political columnist Carol Surkin wondered aloud “How can the Dukakis administration afford to let John W. Delaney leave state government?”

Current Municipal Research Bureau Chairman and former Boston City Councilor, Larry DiCara, reflected this week on Mr. Delaney’s importance to the City, particularly in the mid-1970’s. “At a time when a thoughtful voice was in great need to unite the business and political communities,” DiCara said, “Jack was that voice. He had no enemies. He could talk to [then House Speaker George] Keverian, he could talk to bank presidents, he could talk to the elevator operator at the State House. He was respected by so many people.”

Mr. Delaney entered the private sector in 1980, joining the then First National Bank of Boston to head its government and community affairs department. In 1989, he left the Bank to become a partner at

the Boston law firm of Hale and Dorr (now WilmerHale), from which he retired in 2007. Co-Managing Partner William F. Lee commented that, "Jack has been an influential figure at the firm since he joined us over 20 years ago. He was a valued leader, trusted counsel, and great friend to his colleagues and to the community outside of these walls. With a character and accomplishments as remarkable as his, it is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Jack."

Transition to the private sector did not diminish Mr. Delaney's zeal for civic affairs. Over a period of thirty years, he held key positions on many important boards, commissions and task forces for the City of Boston and the Commonwealth, as well as his adopted home town of Dedham, where he was elected as a Town Meeting District Representative, served as Deputy Town Meeting Moderator, co-chaired Concerned Citizens of Dedham, and was a member of the Dedham Historical Society.

Mr. Delaney especially fought to eliminate waste in government. Michael Widmer, President of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, said: "Jack has been the conscience of the Foundation during his extraordinary service on our Executive Committee over the past 25 years."

Mr. Delaney was a director of the New England Legal Foundation, and active in the Boston Bar Association (BBA), including chairing its Special Committee on Corrections and Sentencing in 1991, and being elected by his peers to the BBA Council in 2003. In 2004, he was appointed by the Supreme Judicial Court to the Massachusetts IOLTA Committee, which oversees the use of interest on lawyers' trust accounts to fund legal services for the poor.

Mr. Delaney poured his time, talent and generosity into a wide range of charitable and pro bono causes, including the Robert F. Kennedy Action Corps, a major non-profit child welfare organization, of which he was a director and served as president from 1978-1981. His long-time friend and fellow RFK Director, and former Democratic state representative, Jon Rotenberg, remembers Mr. Delaney "for his exceptional counsel to RFK, both before and after his term as president."

Mr. Delaney was deeply involved with the Trustees of Reservations, a major land conservation group, of which he served as a director and chairman of the Public Issues Committee. He also served on the Board of the Boston Zoological Society, working to open the Franklin Park Zoo.

Mr. Delaney had a special love for Harvard College. Classmate and Treasurer for the Class of '64, Marc Slotnick, credits Mr. Delaney's efforts as Class Secretary for "bond[ing] our class in ways that virtually every class around us envies."

Mr. Delaney had a special affection for Martha's Vineyard, where he met Betsey Secor, who became his wife of 34 years, and where they have maintained a summer home since 1986.

Above all, Jack Delaney was a devoted, dependable and loving husband, father and friend. In the weeks before his death, as news of his declining condition spread, Mr. Delaney received scores of cards, letters and email messages from community leaders, clients, colleagues and classmates. Perhaps the greatest tribute to his legacy is the astonishing number of those who described him as a cherished friend who always made time for them despite his very busy professional and civic life.

Mr. Delaney is survived by his wife, Betsey, his daughters, Erin of New York City and Elizabeth of Newburyport, Massachusetts, and his foster brother, Mark Chapman of Wilbraham, Massachusetts.

A memorial service will be held on September 15, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. at The Memorial Church, One Harvard Yard, Cambridge, MA. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Brain Science Foundation, 148 Linden Street, Suite 303, Wellesley, MA 02482, [www.brainsciencefoundation.org](http://www.brainsciencefoundation.org).