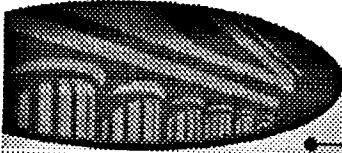


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Breakfast with Eliot Spitzer

Hosted by the New York Law Journal and the Association of the Bar of the City of New York

January 27, 1999

MR. COOPER: Good morning. My name is Mike Cooper. I'm the president of the Association of the Bar, and it's my great pleasure to welcome you to meet and hear the Attorney General, the chief legal officer of the State of New York, Eliot Spitzer.

Eliot was here a little over four months ago with three other candidates in the Democratic primary, and took that occasion to tell you something about his vision for the office of Attorney General and the changes that he would make in its operation. And I guess that message got through, because he bested three other candidates in the primary and then defeated the incumbent.

We are very pleased this morning at the Association to co-host this event with the New York Law Journal, who were our co-hosts back at the candidates debates in early September. And without further ado, I would like to present the president and chief executive officer of the American Lawyer Media, Bill Pollak.


MR. POLLAK: Thank you, Michael. And thank you all for coming to the second of what we hope will be a continuing series of programs in which the Law Journal and the City Bar join to shed light on issues in this state and city's legal and judicial arenas.

The Attorney General is the state's chief legal officer. It's a position that the bar has a unique interest in and concern about. Administrator of a vast legal bureaucracy of about 500 attorneys and more than 1,800 employees, the Attorney General is the lawyer chiefly

So, yes we will examine those cases and we have already moved to expand the range of cases that will be handled by the Civil Rights Bureau. Without looking backward, I think there is nothing to be gained any more by retrospective analysis of what happened in the past four years. I can merely say there will be a much more aggressive civil rights agenda over the next four years.

We have already begun a significant number of cases, which I am not at liberty to talk about. We have already begun looking at some very tough issues and we will move quickly on them.

MS. HOCHBERGER: Thank you. Go ahead.

 MS. SASSOWER: My name is Elena Sassower, I'm the coordinator of the Center for Judicial Accountability. I want to congratulate you and thank you for making as your first priority here the announcement of a public integrity unit. Indeed, that was the first question that I submitted by E-mail and by fax, what had become of that pre-election proposal. So, I am really delighted and overjoyed.

Let me just though skip to my third question that I had proposed today, and that is, that I would hope that a public integrity section would also examine the practices of the Attorney General's office in defending state judges and state agencies sued in litigation.

As you know, we ran a \$3,000 public interest ad about the fraudulent defense tactics of the Attorney General's office.

MS. HOCHBERGER: Is there a question?

MS. SASSOWER: Yeah.

MS. HOCHBERGER: Could we get to the question.

MS. SASSOWER: What steps are you going to take in view of those allegations that the Attorney General's office uses fraud to defend states judges and the State Commission on Judicial Conduct sued in litigation.

MR. SPITZER: Anything that is submitted to us we will look at it.

MS. SASSOWER: I have it. I have it right here.

MR. SPITZER: Okay. Why did I suspect that? Thank you.

MS. HOCHBERGER: This one also came in over E-mail.

What are your views on the unauthorized practice of law generally, and specifically with respect to the unauthorized practice of immigration law in New York? How will your office deal with it?

MR. SPITZER: It is an area where the Attorney General's office has enforcement authority, as I was reminded this morning by my very good friend Ed Meyer. We have co-authority to enforce those rules with the Board of Regents, and we will do so aggressively.

I think it does raise interesting issues in areas of the law where there is, frankly, not sufficient representation. And immigration law in particular is one such area. So I know there have been some grave proposals over the years to permit some non-licensed lawyers to give advice up to a certain threshold in those areas, but it's obviously an area where we will be aggressive in our enforcement where it's appropriate.

MS. HOCHBERGER: Yes.

A SPEAKER: Good morning. It sounds like we're ready for an E-ride for those of you that remember Disney.

What role do you see or foresee for the judicial system, meaning the courts, the bar, your office and other offices with respect to the YK issues that may or may not manifest themselves.

MR. SPITZER: Well, the first thing I have done is to try to see where the Attorney General's office is in terms of being prepared for this problem. And I don't yet have a clear answer in terms of where we are in terms of getting our computer systems ready for the -- for that moment. And obviously people are more worried about hospitals and getting paychecks and the banking system crashing. But, I think we will be prepared.

What role generally there is for lawyers, I really haven't thought about that in particular.