

# HISPANIC NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

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## **Carrie Ricci and Mercedes Sellek Named Co-Chairs of the 2011-2012 HNBA Standing Commission on the Status of Latinas in the Legal Profession**

Washington, D.C. - Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) National President Benny Agosto, Jr. is pleased to announce the appointment of Carrie Ricci and Mercedes ("Mercy") Sellek as Co-Chairs of the HNBA Standing Commission on the Status of Latinas in the Legal Profession.

Carrie Ricci currently serves as an Assistant General Counsel with the Department of Defense Education Activity, a field activity operating the Department's schools in the U.S. and 12 foreign countries, servicing 84,000 children in grades K-12. Prior to joining DoDEA in February of 2010, Ms. Ricci served on active duty in the U.S. Army for 22 years. Ms. Ricci is a 1988 graduate of Georgetown University, where she was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Adjutant General's Corps through the ROTC program. Ms. Ricci served as a platoon leader during Operation DESERT STORM and was subsequently selected for the Army's Fully Funded Legal Education Program. She graduated from the University of Maryland School of Law and became an Army Judge Advocate in 1996. In her first assignment, she served as a prosecutor for the 4th Infantry Division and advised commanders on the laws of war. Ms. Ricci also served as the Chief of International Law for U.S. Central Command and deployed to Qatar during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Ms. Ricci was recognized by the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Washington Post, and CNN for a 2004 opinion in which she advised superiors that certain enhanced interrogation techniques were barred by the Geneva Conventions - an opinion that eventually led forces in Iraq to rescind their policy. Ms. Ricci holds an LL.M. in Intellectual Property Law from George Washington University School of Law, and an LL.M. in Military Law from the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School.

Mercedes Sellek is a Partner and the chair of the real estate section of the minority certified firm of Abadin Cook, in Miami, Florida. She specializes in representing clients in commercial and residential acquisitions/sales, financing, leasing, title examination, zoning and land use and environmental matters. She is fully fluent in Spanish and English and advises foreign clients in connection with acquisitions in

the United States. Mercedes is a member of Fidelity National Title Company's Commercial Real Estate Council and is a speaker for Chicago Title Insurance Company's title seminars. Mercedes devotes many hours to community service, working with local organizations such as Centro Mater Community Center, which assists predominantly Hispanic underprivileged families with childcare and education, and Voices for Children, a non-profit organization which provides foster children with clothing and toys during the holidays and school year. Mercedes received her J.D. from Tulane University School of Law in 1992 and her bachelor's degree in English with a minor in political science from Florida International University in 1989.

Ms. Ricci noted, "today our National President has appointed a dynamic group of women that will bring their diverse work experiences and considerable personal strengths to bear on our continued quest to develop and recommend solutions to overcome the challenges faced by Hispanic women in the legal profession. Mercy and I are thrilled to serve as Co-Chairs of this diverse and accomplished Commission."

"I echo my Co-Chair's sentiments," said Ms. Sellek. "Carrie and I are honored to assume the mantle of leadership for the Commission and look forward to working with Benny Agosto, Peter Reyes, our Commission members, and our national leaders in order to fulfill the Commission's role to support Latina attorneys and allow them to grow and flourish so that boardrooms and offices, both public and private, can truly reflect the diversity of our nation."

"Carrie and Mercy are exemplars of professional accomplishment, service, and leadership, and will be exceptional Co-Chairs of this important commission," said President Agosto. "I look forward to working with them as we continue our efforts to advance Latinas in the legal profession across the United States."

President Agosto also appointed the following women to the Latina Commission:

Veronica Arechederra Hall, Partner, Jackson Lewis, Las Vegas, NV

Silvia Argueta, Executive Director, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA), Los Angeles, CA

Adrienne Dominguez, Of Counsel, Thompson & Knight LLP, Dallas, TX

Dara Fernandez, Associate, Johnston Barton Proctor and Rose LLP, Birmingham, AL

Rosie Gonzalez, Principal, Law Office of Rosie Gonzalez, San Antonio, TX

Melisa López Franzen, Senior Specialist for Government Affairs, Target Corporation, Minneapolis, MN

Monica MacGregor, Director, Alvarez & Marsal Dispute Analysis & Forensic

Services, LLC, Washington, DC

Karen Perez, Attorney Owner, Perez & Associates LLC, Denver, CO

Christine Poleski Gaona, International Advisor, Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), TX

Meshach Rhoades, Corporate Counsel, CenturyLink, Denver, CO

Eneida Roman, Principal, Law Office of Eneida Roman, Boston, MA

Anna Maria Tejada, Of Counsel, Kaufman, Dolowich, Voluck & Gonzo, Hackensack, NJ

Ciarelle "CJ" Valdez, Of Counsel, Valdez Lehman PLLC, Bellevue, WA

Past HNBA Presidents and Life-long Commissioners:

Ambassador Mari Carmen Aponte (1984-1985), Ambassador to El Salvador, Washington, DC

Dolores Atencio (1991-1992), Partner, GCR, LLP, Denver, CO

Mary Hernandez (1994-1995), Founding Partner, GCR, LLP, San Francisco, CA

Lillian Apodaca (1998-1999), Partner and Shareholder, Bingham, Hurst & Apodaca, PC, Albuquerque, NM

Alice Velazquez (1999-2000), Law Office of Alice Velazquez, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Ramona Romero (2008-2009), General Counsel, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC

Diana Sen (2010-2011), Associate Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, New York, NY

*The HNBA is an incorporated, not-for-profit, national membership organization that represents the interests of the more than 100,000 attorneys, judges, law professors, legal professionals, and law students of Hispanic descent in the United States, and its territories. For more information about the HNBA, please visit [www.hnba.com](http://www.hnba.com).*

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