

# **SHEILA DOW-FORD, Esq.**

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## **SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE**

Senior-level businesswoman and civic volunteer with years of experience in quasi-government/non-profit education, finance, policy and law environments, exemplary civic engagement record, excellent communication skills and a record of professional and personal leadership success at state and local level in initiatives dedicated to positively transforming communities and individuals. Political liaison to the Obama Central PA/Harrisburg, PA primary election effort. Deputy E.D. of PA Governor Edward G. Rendell Transition Team. Extensive additional experience in political/policy advocacy arenas in PA and N.J.

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## **KEY QUALIFICATIONS**

- Leader- Experience leading organizations at state and local levels to achieve objectives (see below).
  - Legal/Policy - Well versed in understanding and synthesizing range of legal, regulatory and policy frameworks.
  - Collaborator/Closer- Success in working with diverse constituents to define, communicate and attain team goals and objectives; cultivating relationships and influential partnerships with major stakeholders: national, state, local, community, corporate, academic and political.
  - Communicator- Excellent oral and written communication skills, negotiating abilities, and motivational attributes.
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## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Dow/Ford Strategies, 2007 to present

### **President**

- President of public policy consulting firm engaged in work with host of state and local agencies.

AES/PHEAA, 1994 to 2007

### **Executive Vice President / Chief Counsel**

- Senior counsel to one of the nation's largest student loan providers, with responsibility to manage legal, business policy, regulatory and compliance issues impacting all lines of business. Responsible for team of legal and compliance staff. Worked with national and state policy leaders and political stakeholders to articulate and frame positions on variety of business initiatives. Presented to various audiences on policy positions impacting industry, access to higher education, and other subjects. Oversaw contract development, credit financings, IT, IP, real estate.

Governor Edward G. Rendell Leadership Transition Team, Harrisburg, PA, 2002 to 2003

### **Deputy Executive Director**

- Appointed by PA Governor, Edward G. Rendell, to serve as deputy executive director of the gubernatorial transition team.
- Established policy teams, identified and assessed high-level candidates for positions within Rendell administration.
- Conferred with policy leaders, reviewed policy briefs, and formulated specific action plans on broad range of emergent issues.

**Professional Experience (continued)**

New Jersey School Boards Association, Trenton, New Jersey, 1992 to 1994

**Chief Legal Counsel**

New Jersey Association of School Attorneys, Trenton, New Jersey, 1992 to 1994

**President**

- Senior counsel within organization entrusted to represent interests of 8,500 members of public school boards state-wide. Provided legal counsel and guidance regarding state, federal and local laws and policies impacting school districts. Negotiated all contracts and litigated policy issues impacting school boards and students. Delivered presentations to diverse audiences at national, state and local level on public policy issues impacting public education. Drafted policy statements and conferred with federal, state legislators to obtain results on important public policy issues. Co-authored book on education law; prepared written materials on variety of public policy issues.

*Earlier Experience:*

Hannoch Weissman, P.C., Roseland, New Jersey, 1990 to 1992

Stockman, O'Donnell & Sypek, P.C., Trenton, New Jersey, 1988 to 1990

**Litigation Associate**

Education Law Center, Inc Newark, New Jersey, 1985 to 1988

**Policy Analyst/Staff Attorney**

--Served as policy liaison and counsel to plaintiffs in landmark *Abbott v. Burke* school finance litigation.

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**EDUCATION**

**Juris Doctor**, University of Pennsylvania School of Law, Philadelphia, PA, 1985

**Bachelor of Arts Degree**, LaSalle University, awarded *magna cum laude*, 1982

Post-Law School Programs/Seminars:

Harvard University School of Law, 2004

**Negotiation for Senior Executives Program**

Harvard University/Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, 2002

**Intellectual Renewal for Leaders Seminar**

**CORPORATE / CIVIC INVOLVEMENT**

Member, PA State Board of Education, 2007 - Present

Member, PA Policy Team, *Achieving the Dream* Community College Initiative, 2007- Present

Director, Education and Policy Leadership Center, 2002 - Present

Trustee, Harrisburg University, 2003 to Present

Director, Hershey Entertainment and Resorts Company, 2004 - Present

Member, Harrisburg Regional Chamber Workforce Diversity Initiative

Member, NAACP

Director, President, United Way of Greater Harrisburg, 2004-2007

Director, President, YWCA of Greater Harrisburg, 1996-2000

Co-founder, past president, Sylvan Heights Science Charter School

Member, National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs (NCHELP)

Member, Education Finance Council

Commissioner, PA Commission on Women, 2006-2008

Director, PA Partnerships for Children, 2005 to 2007

Trustee, Lebanon Valley College, 2003-2005

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**SELECTED HONORS/AWARDS/SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS/PUBLICATIONS**

LaSalle University Distinguished Alumni Award (2006)

Featured in "***Voices, African American and Latina Women Share Their Stories of Success***" 2005 (PA Commission on Women)

Keynote Speaker, State System of Higher Education, Women's Diversity Leadership Conference, 2008

Commencement Keynote Speaker, Commonwealth of PA Women's Leadership Program, 2007

Opening Plenary Speaker, Hershey Women's Leadership Conference, 2007

Convener, Africa/Pennsylvania Industry, Infrastructure, Healthcare Symposium, 2005

Co-author, ***Education Law, A Primer***, New Jersey School Boards Press

