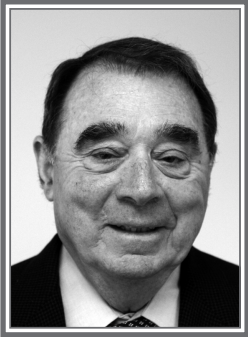




About Our Honoree

George R. Murphy, Esq.



This evening the Peggy Browning Fund honors George R. Murphy, a lion of the labor bar whose commitment to labor unions and workers merits recognition.

George is a native son of Washington, DC. More years ago than he cares to count, he was born to an Irish-American father and an Italian-American mother. At the time, this was a controversial union, which may explain why George has always been comfortable with controversy. He grew up in Southeast Washington, along with his brother William and his sister Antonia, and graduated from Anacostia High School. George learned about the labor movement early when he began working as a cashier at Giant in Bethesda while he was still in high school. In fact, George has been working all his life and has held almost every kind of job, including taxi driver, school teacher and hod carrier (for a week). And of course, he had a paper route as a kid.

Even while working and studying, George found time for many diversions. His love of baseball began early, and he played third base throughout high school. The first year schools in D.C. were integrated, his team was the intra-city champion. George also played American Legion ball, but a hip injury prevented George from playing beyond high school. Baseball's loss was labor's gain.

George received a classic liberal arts education at Catholic University. George majored in biology, and as many of you know, he has an uncanny ability to make amateur medical diagnoses. George was headed to Georgetown Medical School until he found out the school wanted him to take a year of chemistry



before being admitted. George decided he preferred to get on with his life. Luckily, Father John McGraff, a former federal prosecutor and one of George's professors at Catholic, encouraged George to go to law school instead. Medicine's loss was labor's gain.

George attended law school at Catholic's Columbus School of Law. He was a natural. Professor Florian Bartosic, former counsel to the Teamsters and one of the leaders of the labor bar, encouraged George to pursue labor law. It wasn't too hard to persuade George; his inclinations have always been to help the little guy.

While in law school, George got a job with the Communications Workers of America as administrative assistant to legendary CWA President Joseph A. Beirne. While driving around Beirne and George Meany as they frankly discussed current events and international affairs, George received a fascinating education in union politics. One of his proudest moments with CWA was helping to draft Beirne's testimony to Congress advocating the enactment of Medicare.

After law school, George worked at the National Labor Relations Board, where he was an attorney advisor to Board member Gerald Brown from 1964 to 1967. George had several job offers when looking to leave the Board, but he opted to work in the Retail Clerks International Association's legal department. In 1976, RCIA President James Housewright appointed George General Counsel, making him one of the youngest general counsels of an international union.

When the RCIA merged into what is now the United Food and Commercial Workers, George became General Counsel to the new entity, one of the largest and most powerful unions in the country. George was instrumental in the formation of the current UFCW through the mergers of the RCIA, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of America, and eventually at least five other international unions. Of note, none of these mergers experienced legal troubles, which is no small feat.



Along with Jay Foreman and Bill Olwell, George was part of UFCW President Bill Wynn's brain trust and was active in all the major decisions involving the union. George was an important advisor to President Doug Dority when he succeeded President Wynn. George was one of the first general counsels to hire women and African American attorneys on his staff and was also a strong advocate of diversity within the UFCW.

Those familiar with George's time as General Counsel of the UFCW will remember the yearly attorney conferences he instituted and organized. These substantive conferences were known throughout the labor bar as a chance to learn about cutting edge legal thinking, particularly regarding organizing. George has always tried to foster collegiality among the labor bar for the betterment of the labor movement. George regularly met with the general counsels of other internationals to discuss issues of mutual interest, leading to the formation of the AFL-CIO's Lawyers Coordinating Committee and Lawyers Advisory Panel.

George has enthusiastically shared his knowledge and his time with those interested in learning about labor law. For a number of years George was an adjunct professor at Catholic's law school. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of labor lawyers throughout the country that George has mentored. His commitment to developing young labor lawyers prompted him to serve on the Peggy Browning Fund's board of directors since its inception.

While George has preeminent skills in building relationships among people, he's also no slouch when it comes to the law. In fact, George has been instrumental in the development of labor law. Using the model of the NAACP of shepherding civil rights cases with favorable facts through the courts, George spent many years developing cases to protect union rights. Among the more important cases George was involved in are the *Sea First* and *Brown Shoe* decisions of the United States Supreme Court, as well as the *Kroger* doctrine decision in the D.C.



Circuit and the *Meijer* decision in the Ninth Circuit regarding chargeable organizing expenses. George's knowledge of NLRB law is encyclopedic.

George's legislative accomplishments are also noteworthy. He was involved in the passage of ERISA, the FMLA and the WARN Act. George has testified many times before House and Senate committees and was active in attempts to reform labor law during 1978 and 1979.

George retired from the UFCW in 1998. But instead of lying around the pool, as he was certainly entitled to do after such a full and stellar career, George began a new career by founding the Washington office of Davis, Cowell & Bowe. For the past 10 years he has advised international and local unions on all aspects of labor law, represented individual workers in employment discrimination and wage-and-hour class actions, and developed a new crop of labor attorneys. As anyone lucky enough to have worked with George can attest, he is a tireless advocate for his clients—in his mind, their problems are his problems, but his victories are their victories. One of his proudest moments was when he accepted the D.C. Employment Justice Center's 2007 Pro Bono Firm of the Year Award on behalf of Davis Cowell & Bowe. George has steadfastly encouraged the attorneys he works with to volunteer at the EJC and has undertaken *pro bono* cases that have generated hundreds of thousands of dollars for low income workers in D.C.

George's successful legal career is due to his many positive attributes, including his attention to detail, his work ethic, his good humor and his amazing memory. But what is unique about George, and what is readily apparent to his colleagues and his adversaries, is his ethical compass. George believes in right and wrong. Even when it would benefit him or his clients, he simply will not do something he thinks is wrong. George has taught his colleagues, students and clients many things, but perhaps George's greatest contribution to the labor bar has been this strong sense of morality.



George has been married to his wife Barbara for 48 years. They have four sons: George, Thomas, Brian and John. All of them have followed George into the labor movement or labor law in one capacity or another, and George and Barbara are proud that all their sons have chosen to follow George's example of being of service to others. George has nine beautiful grandchildren, ranging from age three to nineteen.

We hope that George will continue his work on behalf of labor for many years to come, and his receiving this honor should not be taken as a sign that he is slowing down or getting out of the game. Still, it is fitting to close our tribute by quoting from one made upon George's retirement from the UFCW, which Senator Edward Kennedy read into the Congressional Record:

In a very real sense, George has lived the American dream. He was born and raised in Washington, DC. His father William, served as a police officer here. His mother, Rose, was a dedicated school teacher. George's parents instilled in him the commitment to excellence and service that have made him one of the finest and most respected labor attorneys in the country.

Throughout his 31 years of service, he has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to the ideals and principles of the labor movement that have led to so many achievements for union members and for millions of other workers across the country whose lives are better today because of George Murphy.

Those of us who have worked with George couldn't agree more.

The preceding tribute to our honoree was written by the attorneys in the D.C. office of Davis, Cowell & Bowe, LLP, who are proud and honored to work with George every day.