

New York Law School Goes to Washington

Professors Seth D. Harris and Beth Simone Noveck Join Obama's Team

By LaToya Jordan



When building his administration, President Barack Obama sought top experts to help him realize his platform for change in America. He found two of those experts—Professors Seth D. Harris and Beth Simone Noveck—among the faculty of New York Law School.

Professor Harris has been appointed Deputy Secretary of Labor for the U.S. Department of Labor, and Professor Noveck has been appointed head of the White House Open Government Initiative and Deputy Chief Technology Officer. Both professors are currently on a leave of absence from the Law School.

As Deputy Secretary of Labor, Professor Harris holds the second-highest position within the department, where he manages staff to ensure that the Obama administration's goals of commitment to open government, responsible stewardship of taxpayers' money, and citizen engagement are fulfilled.

"I am excited to be a part of the team that's working to help families get back on their feet," Professor Harris says. "We need to create more jobs for people." He is helping to execute the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which is intended to create or save millions of jobs. "That's a critically important goal, and the Department of Labor is working hard with our colleagues across the government to implement that landmark legislation. But we are also in the business of assuring that those jobs, and all jobs, are 'good jobs.'"

An expert in labor and employment law, Professor Harris is well positioned to move these goals forward. He previously served as the Chair of the Obama campaign's Labor, Employment, and Workplace Policy Committee and as Co-chair of its Disability Policy

Committee. He was also a member of the Obama-Biden Transition Project's Agency Review Working Group, responsible for the labor, education, and transportation agencies. Prior to joining New York Law School in 2000, Professor Harris worked closely with the White House and members of Congress during the Clinton Administration. At the Law School, he directs the Labor & Employment Law Program and organizes the annual Tony Coelho Lecture in Disability Employment Law & Policy.

Professor Noveck is bringing her own brand of expertise to the White House. As Deputy Chief Technology Officer, she leads the White House Open Government Initiative, which implements the administration's policy on innovation in government. On his first full day in office, President Obama issued an executive memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, calling for the creation of an "unprecedented level of openness in government" and the establishment of "a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration."

"The administration is taking advantage of new technology to make government more transparent and decision making more participatory, tapping the intelligence and expertise of the American people," Professor Noveck says. "By modeling how to make decisions more openly in collaboration with the public, the hope is to proliferate many more opportunities for Americans to share their know-how and improve the quality of our democracy."

Professor Noveck has previously created systems of public participation in government. With students at the Law School, she developed the Peer-to-Patent project for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, opening the patent process to community input for the first time. She directed the School's Institute for Information Law & Policy and the Democracy Design Workshop, and is the author of *Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger, and Citizens More Powerful* (Brookings Institution Press, June 2009).

New York Law School salutes Professors Harris and Noveck for their appointments and the work they are doing to benefit the entire nation. 