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# Cleveland Business

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## **Former U.S. attorneys form powerful pair**

**BakerHostetler considers Rendon hiring a coup; she joins Dettelbach in the firm's national litigation group**

By **Jeremy Nobile**

When word spread earlier this year that U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was forcing out U.S. attorneys put in place under the Obama administration, Steven Dettelbach wasted no time in recruiting Carole Rendon to the law firm he returned to following his own service as the head prosecutor for this part of the state.

"I knew that if Carole decided to come back to the practice of law, she would be one of the most sought-after lawyers in the country at that point," said Dettelbach, who served as the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio from 2009 to February 2016, when he resigned to return to private practice at Cleveland-based BakerHostetler, where he is co-leader of the firm's national white collar defense and corporate investigations team.

Now, the duo are reunited in Cleveland, thanks to a hire that partners consider a coup for the firm.

Dettelbach sought Rendon as his first assistant U.S. attorney when he took on the district's lead prosecutor job in 2009. Rendon is the first woman to hold that position in the Justice Department's Northern District.

Upon Dettelbach's resignation, Rendon filled in, receiving Senate confirmation for the job last July. At the direction of the Donald Trump administration's top federal prosecutor, though, Rendon and 45 of her U.S. attorney colleagues were directed to resign in March.

"We all assumed that we would eventually be replaced," Rendon said. "That's the norm."

Administrations in the past have kept some U.S. attorneys. And the typical progression is for current U.S. attorneys to tender resignations once a successor is nominated.

But the country now has an atypical president. And the experience for those prosecutors was similarly atypical.

"I was not expecting that on a Friday afternoon that suddenly we'd be asked to resign effectively immediately," Rendon said. "That type of transition was not ideal."

While her time was seemingly cut a bit short, there was a silver lining in the opportunities it created for her in the world of private practice.

As a U.S. attorney, Rendon focused efforts on, among other things, the prosecution of public corruption, civil



Photo by CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Carole Rendon

rights, drug trafficking, consumer fraud, human trafficking and firearms crimes. Prior to serving as a chief federal law enforcement officer in Ohio, Rendon served 10 years as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's office in Boston, and would eventually become chief of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. Some cases she worked on there were tied to infamous gangster Whitey Bulger (one of the mobsters that inspired the movie "The Departed").

In Cleveland, she served as lead counsel on some major civil matters, including the 2015 consent decree with the city of Cleveland reforming the police department (a result of an investigation Dettelbach oversaw).

Rendon, an alumna of Mayfield High School, surely had her pick of firms to work at. But ties to Cleveland — and encouragement from her predecessor in the Justice Department — kept her here.

"When I heard the news they had let all those U.S. attorneys go," Dettelbach said, "I waited a respectable amount of time before I tried to get my call in a long line of calls I knew she would be getting to have her come to work."

That period of time was about 20 minutes.

Rendon said she didn't really take much convincing, though.

"I'm a Cleveland girl, and a proud resident of 'Believeland,'" she said. "I spent seven-and-a-half years of my life pouring blood, sweat and tears into this city. So there was no way I was leaving."

What really sealed the deal, Rendon said, was an opportunity to stay involved with work that's been personally important to her in crime prevention, the heroin epidemic, improving education and cybersecurity. Rendon tutors at Memorial Elementary School in Cleveland, which she'll continue doing. She also can stay involved in the Justice Department's heroin task force and the Northeast Ohio CyberConsortium she established.

Those opportunities are all in addition to joining a firm with a prominent white collar and corporate investigations practice.

Yet, even for a firm with a history of landing U.S. attorneys, having two recent ones with Cleveland roots is quite meaningful for their practice.

And it's something the firm sees attracting client interest.

"Just knowing what I knew about her from following her career while she was in government, and also seeing what Steve brought to us with the same experience, I knew two had to be better than one," said Hewitt Shaw, BakerHostetler's managing partner of the Cleveland office. "This was a no-brainer for us. To have them in tandem is pretty powerful."

"Here in Cleveland, we have the benefit of 100 years of roots, but that's augmented by the perspectives and experience and expertise you get from talent across the country," he added. "So this is hugely important for us."

Ray Whitman, chair of the firm's national litigation group — which comprises some 350 litigators, making it the firm's largest practice group — said Rendon's hire couldn't have come at a better time for the firm. He said the practice has been a major growth point for the last seven years or so, and each year the firm is adding more people to the practice.



Photo by CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Steven Dettelbach

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