

My First Year at Selendy Gay

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After two back-to-back clerkships, Elizabeth Snow set out to join a litigation firm that would give her firsthand experience from the start and align with her values. A little more than one year after joining Selendy Gay, Elizabeth has worked on cutting-edge commercial matters, and is the Pro Bono Captain of the Associates Committee and a member of the firm's Pro Bono Committee.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your career before joining Selendy Gay.

I graduated from Columbia Law School in 2018 and worked at a large law firm in New York City before my clerkships. I clerked for Judge Bianco on the Second Circuit, where I then got the opportunity to clerk for Judge Lee in her first year on the bench. During both my clerkships, I gained exposure to a wide range of appellate matters.

What attracted you to Selendy Gay?

I was looking for a firm that had a balance of trial and appellate cases and a mix of plaintiff and defense work so that I could broaden my experience. I was excited to work at a litigation-only shop, which could work with an incredibly diverse set of clients.

It was also clear to me from speaking with people at the firm and its reputation that Selendy Gay has a strong set of values. The culture is incredibly inclusive—with two female named partners and women in firm leadership, it felt like a place where women could thrive. Most importantly, I was looking for a firm that demonstrates its commitment to the greater good through large public impact pro bono matters and public interest commercial cases.

What has stood out to you about your first year?

After clerking for two years in an appellate court, it was a big transition coming back to private practice, especially at a firm so focused on trials. I came here looking for high-level opportunities, and in my first year, I have been able to stand up in court multiple times and case manage multiple large matters.

One of the cases I serve as case manager for is defending SaveOn, which helps self-funded health plans deal with rising drug prices, against J&J, one of the nation's largest drug manufacturers. We are in the middle of a very contentious discovery process, which has given me the opportunity to see the full document discovery process: from serving the discovery requests, meeting and conferring, drafting the brief, and arguing the motion on a set of requests. I've received meaningful feedback from even the most senior partners. It has been an incredibly empowering experience at this stage in my career.

What also stood out to me was the license given to me by partners to think creatively about a case before we even get to the courtroom. For example, I am on a case team that represents local unions in Florida challenging a new anti-teacher and anti-union bill which bars the arbitration of personnel decisions for public university professors. I have been involved in thinking creatively to develop our theories of the case, speaking with the plaintiffs, and digging into the case law and facts surrounding the case.

You've been Pro Bono Captain and a member of the firm's Pro Bono Committee since April 2023. What do you hope to accomplish in that role?

As a member of the Pro Bono and Associates Committees, I am excited to work with our leadership to shape the direction of the firm's pro bono efforts, and to collaborate with associates to get the opportunities they want, whether it's for a cause that someone is passionate about, or if there are new professional skills that they can hone on a pro bono case.

From a professional standpoint, it's rewarding to have a front-row seat to how lawyers bring cases to the firm, even for pro bono matters—how rigorous the review process is, how to think critically about the issues, and how the firm decides if a matter is something we should take a stand on.

What do you find most rewarding about pro bono work? Most challenging?

I am on the team representing eight U.S. Capitol Police Officers seeking to hold former President Donald Trump and extremist groups responsible for their acts of violence in the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. The outcome of the case has a significant impact on each plaintiff, but also in its implications in defense of our country's democracy and the integrity of our electoral process. It has been rewarding, but challenging, to slowly obtain the discovery we need to help our clients close this chapter.

How does your passion for pro bono work complement your commercial practice?

Right now, my pro bono and commercial work are in parallel tracks, as both are going through discovery. Even though the facts and legal issues are entirely different, switching mindsets between the matters has opened up a new way to think about tactics on the case. The skills I develop from one case transfer to other matters, even when they are on different subjects.

What are you most looking forward to in the next phase of your career at Selendy Gay?

I am excited to continue learning from each new opportunity here. There are so many things I have done for the first time at the firm, like conducting my first oral argument, that I have been able to learn from. I am looking forward to applying those lessons to new challenges.

Attorney

- Elizabeth Snow