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How to Get a Job in the Obama Administration, If You Are Jewish

This morning between meetings, I sat myself, and my laptop, down at a Starbucks that is adjacent to the Edward Bennett Williams Building in downtown D.C. The building houses the offices of the very powerful inside the beltway law firm, Williams & Connolly.

As I am sipping on my grande mocha, who walks in? None other than Howard Gutman. He is with another man, younger by between 15 and 20 years. They sit down across from me.

Gutman is a partner at Williams & Connolly. According to WC's bio of him, Gutman is:

> Identified as one of "Washington's Top Lawyers" by Washingtonian magazine (December 2004, December 2007)...While appreciating anonymity, Mr. Gutman's clients have included Fortune 500 companies, high tech companies, financial services firms, privately held enterprises, labor unions, pensions funds, law firms and accounting firms, government entities, real estate developers, sports teams, high-net-worth individuals, labor union officials, athletes, government officials, and political candidates. These clients have been located throughout the United States and abroad. He is also litigation counsel for Friedman, Billings & Ramsey ("FBR"), one of the top 10 investment banks in the nation...
>
> He was an original member of the Obama National Finance Committee and a Trustee on the Presidential Inauguration Committee. He assisted the Gore campaign in Florida in 2000. Mr. Gutman appeared in several episodes of the HBO series "K Street," playing (not surprisingly) a Washington attorney and has made other movie and media appearances. Mr. Gutman has been an Editor of Litigation Magazine for over 23 years and an active participant in the ABA's Litigation Section. He is a former Special Assistant to F.B.I. Director William H. Webster and a member of the Board of Directors of the Washington Hebrew Home.

Obama has nominated him for the Ambassadorship to Belgium.

As they begin to talk, the younger guy, who I don't recognize, is clearly looking for help in finding a job in the Obama Administration.

Gutman gives him the name and telephone number, which I didn't catch, of someone at Treasury.

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Every once and awhile Gutman's cell phone rings and he gets up to take the phone calls outside. The ring is very loud and Gutman has the ringer set to some kind of old fashioned telephone ring.

On one of his returns, he tells the younger guy. "It's the State Department so I have to take the calls."

He then gives the younger guy the name and phone number of Dan Shapiro. Shapiro is Head of the Middle East desk at the National Security Council.

The younger guy mentions that he wonders what happened to Dennis Ross who was Special Advisor for the Gulf and Southwest Asia at the State Departmen. The younger guy tells Gutman, "One day he was there the next he is gone. I don't know what happened to him."

This energizes Gutman and he tells the younger guy, "Shapiro is the guy to call. He is turning into the go to guy for Jews looking for a job in the Administration. Call him and tell him, Howard Gutman told you to call."

As they leave, Gutman turns to the younger guy once more and says, "Hey, if you find out what happened to Ross let me know. You know, kind of as payback for what I gave you here."

posted by Robert Wenzel at 11:49 AM

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