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New face on National Labor Relations Board

Buffalo attorney appointed by President Obama to serve

Reprinted from The Buffalo News

By Jerry Zremski

WASHINGTON — A prominent Buffalo labor lawyer will likely take a seat on what a colleague called “the Supreme Court for labor law” later this year.

President Obama has named Mark Gaston Pearce, a 55-year-old partner with the Buffalo firm Creighton, Pearce, Johnsen & Giroux, to the National Labor Relations Board. The board administers the main law that governs relations between unions, companies and workers.

Pearce said he could not comment until after the Senate holds a confirmation hearing on his nomination. The full Senate will have to vote on his appointment. Current and former colleagues described Pearce as a labor-friendly lawyer who also has good relations with attorneys who represent management.

“The good thing about Mark is that he has represented working people for decades, so he comes to this not with an ideological bent but with real working knowledge,” said Catherine Creighton, Pearce’s law partner.



Mark G. Pearce '78

As administrator of the National Labor Relations Act, the NLRB oversees elections where workers determine whether they want to join a union. The board also is charged with preventing and remedying unfair labor practices.

“They create the policies and trends,” said Creighton, who dubbed the NLRB the labor-law version of the U. S. Supreme Court.

The board’s five members serve five-year terms. Obama appointed Pearce along with Craig Becker, associate general counsel to both the Service Employees International Union and the American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), to fill two of the board’s five vacancies.

Richard Lipsitz, of the Buffalo firm Lipsitz Green Scime Cambria, said Pearce is well-respected among lawyers who represent unions and management alike.

“I’m confident that Mark will be confirmed without any real problem because of his solid reputation,” said Lipsitz, who noted that Pearce used to work at his firm. “We loved his work,” Lipsitz added.

A Brooklyn native, Pearce graduated from Cornell University and moved to Buffalo to attend the University at Buffalo Law School.

Pearce served as a district trial specialist with the NLRB’s Buffalo office before entering private practice. He has served on the Commission on Increasing Diversity in the State Government Workforce and the State Industrial Board of Appeals.

In addition, Pearce serves as an adjunct professor at the Cornell University School of Industrial Labor Relations. He is also an accomplished painter whose work has been displayed at the Buffalo Arts Council and the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington.

Pearce is not, however, especially active in politics. While many lawyers give thousands of dollars in political contributions, a check of federal records showed that in the last two years, Pearce made just one donation, sending the Obama presidential campaign \$250 last October.

Pearce is the first attorney with a Buffalo connection to serve on the board since Sarah M. Fox, a former Buffalo journalist who later became a lawyer on Capitol Hill, who was appointed to the board by President Bill Clinton in 1996.