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PROFILES IN POWER: THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL LAWYERS IN AMERICA

A lawyer like Dennis Block can dream up new ways to work deals for his corporate clients that turn entire industries on their ear. Richard E. Wiley has as much to say about the telecommunications business as anyone in private life. Theodore B. Olson advocates before the nation's highest courts on the most pressing issues of the day.

Attorneys like these fit the dictionary definition of powerbroker, and all three take their bows as, for the first time in six years, we offer our take on the country's most influential lawyers.

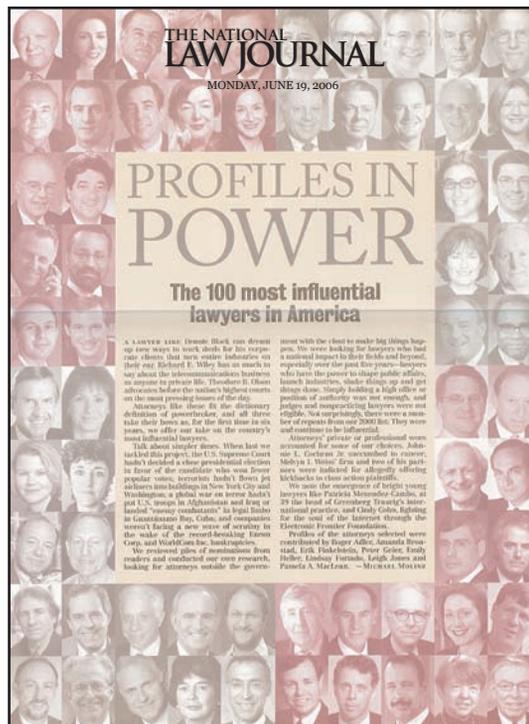
Talk about simpler times. When last we tackled this project, the U.S. Supreme Court hadn't decided a close presidential election in favor of the candidate who won fewer popular votes; terrorists hadn't flown jet airliners into buildings in New York City and Washington; a global war on terror hadn't put U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq or landed "enemy combatants" in legal limbo in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba; and companies weren't facing a new wave of scrutiny in the wake of the record-breaking Enron Corp. and WorldCom Inc. bankruptcies.

We reviewed piles of nominations from readers and conducted our own research, looking for attorneys outside the government with the clout to make big things happen. We were looking for lawyers who had a national impact in their fields and beyond, especially over the past five years—lawyers who have the power to shape public affairs, launch industries, shake things up and get things done. Simply holding a high office or position of authority was not enough, and judges and nonpracticing lawyers were not eligible. Not surprisingly, there were a number of repeats from our 2000 list: They were and continue to be influential.

Attorneys' private or professional woes accounted for some of our choices. Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. succumbed to cancer; Melvyn I. Weiss' firm and two of his partners were indicted for allegedly offering kickbacks to class action plaintiffs.

We note the emergence of bright young lawyers like Patricia Menendez-Cambo, at 39 the head of Greenberg Traurig's international practice, and Cindy Cohn, fighting for the soul of the Internet through the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Profiles of the attorneys selected were contributed by Roger Adler, Amanda Bronstad, Erik Finkelstein, Peter Geier, Emily Heller, Lindsay Fortado, Leigh Jones and Pamela A. MacLean.



BRIAN PANISH 48, PANISH, SHEA & BOYLE, LOS ANGELES

A wrongful death and personal injury plaintiffs' lawyer, Panish has carved a niche in obtaining high-dollar verdicts—including his \$4.9 billion verdict in 1999 against General Motors Corp. over a defective fuel tank that burned a family, the largest personal injury verdict in U.S. history; more recently, in 2005, represented the family of a 4-year-old girl in a pedestrian accident in a case that ended in a \$27.4 million verdict; won a \$2.8 million verdict for the parents of a passenger on a commuter train hit by a Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway train; obtained \$58 million, the largest single plaintiff personal injury verdict in California at the time; represents plaintiffs in 100 cases against makers of welding rods, alleging their products caused Parkinson's-like sicknesses.