

Associate Quits In Epic Fashion, Says Willkie Farr's Principles 'Are Now So Deeply Compromised'

What happened to the firm's courage?



When [Willkie Farr surrendered](#) to Donald Trump, inking a deal to [save their hide](#) (that is, avoid one of the [increasingly common](#) Executive Orders targeting Biglaw), we wondered how that move would go over at the firm. Because we know that similar bargains at other Biglaw firms [went over](#) like a [lead balloon](#), with a lot of [anger](#) boiling at the firms, leading to some principled [resignations](#).

From all accounts Above the Law's heard, there's deep disappointment the firm didn't stand up to defend the rule of law. And an associate, Andrew Silberstein, has put his money where his mouth is (unlike some of the prominent names at the firm) and quit because the firm bent the knee to Trump.

Insiders called Silberstein's departure memo "One of the more colorful resignation letters I've seen!" And, honestly, it's a great read, especially for those frustrated with the [lackluster response](#) from Biglaw to Trump's attack on the industry.

Silberstein's resignation:

Willkie Farr & Gallagher stated in its announcement on Tuesday that its decision to acquiesce to the Trump administration's unprecedented demand was "incredibly difficult."

The more difficult, and moral, decision would have been to stand with Perkins Coie and other such courageous firms. The rule of law is clearly under threat. They have come for us, and we did not speak out. Who is next?

I am only a cog in this machine, the gears of which will churn on mechanistically no matter my decision to leave, as they would have churned on with me loyally and passionately had Willkie Farr & Gallagher stood in defense of the rule of law. This proud and storied century & a half old institution comprised of 1200 brilliant legal minds, of more than \$1 billion in revenue last year. If this institution cannot fight, then who? There are moments in a life of becoming & unbecoming and what we have here is the menace of both. Where is our courage?

My four plus years here were marked with good fortune: hardworking, intelligent colleagues, participation in the type of voting rights trial that our benefactor surely took into consideration when he decided to put his thumb on the scale and test our mettle. But Willkie is a different firm today. The principles this firm purportedly valued over the years I've worked here are now so deeply compromised. We signed them away when we made this deal. What will Willkie say when it faces the next set of demands? Is there a line in the sand?

I am a cog whose words & actions cannot mean a thing. But if my words mean nothing, so too do yours. If my actions mean nothing, so too do yours. So too the words & actions of every associate and partner at this firm and every other. Of all workers left to the whim of corporate executives who have forgotten the import of truth and principle. But I know that to be false. Our words and actions mean everything. Every day comes clearer that individuals too must fight. Must carve out their place in all this. It is only in the aggregate we lose ourselves. But it is also only in the aggregate we can truly be saved.

I've given my notice and am signing off. To all the people I've worked with over the years, I really do count my blessings and wish you well. Thank you.

From: Silberstein, Andrew <ASilberstein@willkie.com>
Date: April 3, 2025 at 11:01:21 AM EDT
Subject: FW: Important Announcement from Executive Committee
To: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE <EXECUTIVE_COMMITTEE@willkie.com>, TAX DEPARTMENT - US <TAX_DEPARTMENT-US@willkie.com>
Cc: PARTNERS - NY <PARTNERS-NY@willkie.com>

Hi all,

Willkie Farr & Gallagher stated in its announcement on Tuesday that its decision to acquiesce to the Trump administration's unprecedented demands was "incredibly difficult."

The more difficult, and moral, decision would have been to stand with Perkins Coie and other such courageous firms. The rule of law is clearly under threat. They have come for us, and we did not speak out. Who is next?

I am only a cog in this machine, the gears of which will churn on mechanistically no matter my decision to leave, as they would have churned on with me loyally and passionately had Willkie Farr & Gallagher stood in defense of the rule of law. This proud and storied century & a half old institution comprised of 1200 brilliant legal minds, of more than \$1 billion in revenue a year. If this institution cannot fight, then who? There are moments in a life of becoming & unbecoming and what we have here is the menace of both. Where is our courage?

My four plus years here were marked with good fortune: hardworking, intelligent colleagues, participation in the type of voting rights trial that our new benefactor surely took into consideration when he decided to put his thumb on the scale and test our mettle. But Willkie is a different firm today. The principles this firm purportedly valued over the years I've worked here are now so deeply compromised. We signed them away when we made this deal. What will Willkie say when it faces the next set of demands. Is there a line in the sand?

I am a cog whose words & actions cannot mean a thing. But if my words mean nothing, so too do yours. If my actions mean nothing, so too do yours. So too the words & actions of every associate and partner at this firm and every other. Of all workers left to the whim of corporate executives who have forgotten the import of truth and principle. But I know that to be false. Our words and actions mean everything. Every day comes clearer that individuals too must fight. Must carve out their place in all this. It is only in the aggregate we lose ourselves. But it is also only in the aggregate we can truly be saved.

I've given my notice and am signing off. To all the people I've worked with over the years, I really do count my blessings and wish you well. Thank you.

Andrew Silberstein
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP
787 Seventh Avenue | New York, NY 10019-6099
Direct: +1 212 728 3504 | Fax: +1 212 728 8111
asilberstein@willkie.com | vCard | www.willkie.com/bio

That's sure one way to exit a firm. I wouldn't be surprised if others followed suit.



Kathryn Rubino is a Senior Editor at Above the Law, host of [The Jabot podcast](#), and co-host of [Thinking Like A Lawyer](#). AtL tipsters are the best, so please connect with her. Feel free to email [her](#) with any tips, questions, or comments and follow her on Twitter [@Kathryn1](#) or Mastodon [@Kathryn1@mastodon.social](#).