

Race to lead D.C. lawyers' association grows heated amid attacks on law firms



Election season is under way in Washington and the [candidates](#) are not holding anything back.

The race to lead the nonprofit D.C. Bar Association is taking place at a precarious moment in national politics—and that's reflected in the rhetoric on the campaign trail.

"I've been a member of the D.C. Bar for 30 years and this is the first time that the election has generated this kind of interest," said Bob Spagnoletti, the chief executive officer of the legal group.

One of the two candidates running for bar president, which is largely an administrative role, is Brad Bondi, the younger brother of President Trump's Attorney General Pam Bondi.

The race comes as the Trump administration has punished big law firms because of their partners and clients, lobbed rhetorical attacks against judges, and fired career lawyers at federal agencies.

Spagnoletti said more than 30,000 people have already voted in the election. That's more than triple the previous record set in 1990.

Some of that interest was on display recently at a reception to meet the candidates.

Diane Seltzer, the other candidate in the race, is an employment attorney who operates her own small firm. Seltzer told the crowd about the fear she's hearing from lawyers across Washington.

"We're no longer afraid of, 'What if I'm not prepared' or if I missed a case I should have known," Seltzer said. "We're literally afraid of terrible consequences just for doing our jobs."

Seltzer said she's listening to those people and making their concerns the center of her campaign.

"My priority is making sure that the rule of law is upheld, that we feel that we are safe to do our jobs and that we can go forward every day representing the clients we choose," she said, to a round of applause from lawyers who attended the reception.

The bar president mostly plays an administrative role and has no say in attorney discipline.

Seltzer is running against prominent securities attorney Brad Bondi, the attorney general's brother. Bondi has represented billionaire Elon Musk and the Trump Media and Technology Group.

On a Zoom forum last week, Bondi explained why he's in the race.

"I'm running to lead our bar with the same care that I've brought to serving my clients, to teaching at Georgetown and George Mason law schools, to raising my five children," he said.

Bondi said the bar is at a crossroads—and that it should steer clear of political debates.

"I need your vote to keep our bar apolitical, as it's meant to be, and I need you to spread the word to your colleagues," he said.

So far, Seltzer has racked up endorsements from nearly two dozen former D.C. Bar presidents.

George Conway is a prominent critic of President Trump and his Justice Department. Conway drew national attention to the election a few weeks ago, when [he posted about the race](#) on Instagram.

"I'm asking you to vote—and most importantly, to vote against somebody—to vote against Brad Bondi," Conway said.

Conway is not a member of the D.C. Bar and he's not eligible to vote there. But his video seems to have struck a nerve.

The National Review magazine [wrote a story](#) headlined, "Don't Blame Brad Bondi for His Sister."

And Bondi used the issue to criticize his opponent, at the online candidate forum last week.

"She posted on her social media claims that I was involved in a conspiracy to destroy the rule of law and was an existential threat to the country," Bondi began.

Seltzer interjected to challenge his assertion, prompting Bondi to clarify that he was talking about Conway's social media post, that his children had seen.

Seltzer replied that none of those words had come out of her mouth.

Then, the moderator stepped in to end the debate.

Voting for the D.C. Bar presidential election ends June 4. Results will be announced a few days later.