

## Alumni Profile: Senator William “Mo” Cowan

### What prompted your decision to return to Mintz?

How does one say no to Bob Bodian and Bob Popeo? Seriously, I physically left the firm for four years, but I left behind many wonderful memories, and even more friends. So when I considered my post-public service, Mintz was never far from mind. But ultimately the opportunity to return and work at Mintz and have a leadership role in ML Strategies led to my decision. It has been an exciting return. I have been busy with client development, offering strategic counsel to the firm and ML Strategies clients, attending to the operations of ML Strategies with Steve Tocco, and getting reacquainted with colleagues, old and new.



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// PROGRAM CHAIR

Narges Kakalia

### How did you get from Mintz to the Senate?

In 2009, I applied for a seat on the United States District Court — District of Massachusetts, and I reached out to Governor Patrick for his support. He offered it, but as the judicial selection played out, also offered me the chance to join his administration as his Chief Legal Counsel should the judicial seat go to another. When it did, I told the Governor, whom I have known for a decade and a half, that I would be honored to join his team.

I served as Governor Patrick's Chief Legal Counsel from November 2009 to December 2010. In December 2010, he asked me to serve as Chief of Staff in his second term. I held that position until early 2013, when I announced my plan to return to the private sector. But by then President Obama had appointed John Kerry to serve as Secretary of State, and before I could follow through on my plan, Governor Patrick asked me to serve as the interim Senator for Massachusetts.

I served in that position until Senator Ed Markey was sworn into the seat on July 16, 2013.

### What did a typical day in the Senate look like?

The typical day in the Senate was filled with committee meetings, constituent meetings, discussions with colleagues regarding legislative initiatives, and usually votes when we were in session. Three times a week I stood in for the President pro tempore (the most senior senator in the majority party, currently Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont) to open and preside over the Senate session. I most enjoyed meeting with constituents and often surprised my staff by joining constituent meetings unannounced. My typical day also was atypical because I did not have to do any fundraising, unlike all of my colleagues.

### What did you enjoy most about your role as a US senator?

I very much enjoyed the interactions with my Senate colleagues. I found all of my fellow senators to be warm and welcoming, without regard for political affiliation. And I enjoyed digging in on the issues. I served at a most dynamic time and there were no mundane issues on the table. During my short stint in the Senate we considered the Senate's budget for the

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next fiscal year, gun violence prevention measures, marketplace fairness, comprehensive immigration reform, the situation in Syria, and much more. I only wish my colleagues and I would have been able to put more of the politics aside to close out on some of those important issues.

#### What were some of the most compelling issues that arose during your time in the Senate?

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I took office about a month and a half after the Newtown, CT shootings. The horror of that event and the pangs of loss lingered over the Chamber, and led to robust debate about gun rights, violence, and safety. I was heartened that a bipartisan bill ultimately was proposed, but equally disheartened when the bill ultimately was defeated. In addition, and throughout my term, I remained concerned about the fiscal well-being of the nation and Congress's inability — or unwillingness — to come together with the interests of the country first in our minds. I also had the opportunity to visit the Middle East with a few of my Senate colleagues, gaining an up-close perspective on the Syrian conflict and its impact on the region. This situation concerns me greatly.

#### What is the best piece of career advice you ever received?

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Always believe that you can be anyone's equal, but never believe you're better than anyone (hat tip: my mom).

It is okay to be wrong, but it is never good to be uncertain (hat tip: Bob Popeo).

#### What do you remember most about your days at Mintz?

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I will recall with fondness the kindness, care, and attention I received during my first baker's-dozen years at Mintz. I grew up — professionally and personally — at Mintz. [The firm] was there for me on one of the happiest days of my life (there were two tables full of Mintz colleagues at my wedding) and one of my darkest (Bob Popeo visiting with me to offer comfort and perspective after my uncle's suicide). I also fondly recall my many interactions with Richard Mintz, starting with my earliest: lunch my first week at the firm. We went for sushi and Richard ordered sake with his meal. I knew then and there I was at the right firm.

#### What did you learn or experience while at Mintz that has helped you in your career?

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Wherever you are and whatever you're doing, be all in. Partake in the experience and environment fully and never stop looking for new ways to add value. And, finally, treat everyone with respect and care because everyone plays an important role in the work at hand.

#### QUICK FUN FACTS

**First job:** Cutting the lawn at my church.

**Favorite TV show:** Currently, Archer or Sherlock Holmes (BBC/PBS). All-time favorite, The Cosby Show (not to be confused with The Cosby Mysteries, which was awful!).

**Person you'd most like to meet in life:** I'd love to see my late father again and know whether I have lived a life of which he would be proud.

**Favorite dessert:** Apple pie.

**Something people don't know about you:** If I had the time and resources, I would travel the world... following Prince in concert!