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Nicole Lamb-Hale, Nominee for Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Manufacturing and Services

Who is Nicole Lamb-Hale?

On November 18, 2009 President Obama nominated Nicole Lamb-Hale to be the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Manufacturing and Services. Her only apparent connection to manufacturing is her bankruptcy practice.

Detroit Empowerment Zone

While at Dykema Gossett she took three months in 1994 to work as General Counsel to help set -up the Detroit Empowerment Zone, eventually the Empowerment Zone Development Corporation.

“Given the manufacturing situation in the U.S., the President could have done better than to nominate a bankruptcy guru to a position that is supposed to be an advocate for these manufacturers.”

-Bill Wilson, President, Americans for Limited Government

“The Empowerment Zone Development Corporation (EZDC) is a community-based, 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization established by the City of Detroit to coordinate and evaluate programs, implement the strategic plan and facilitate communication and synergy among stakeholders. The organization is comprised of a professional and administrative staff, a Board of

Bankruptcy guru...

Directors, an executive committee, a Neighborhood Review Panel (NRP) and other sub-committees. The EZDC operates within

guidelines approved by the City of Detroit.”

“The mission of the EZDC is to fund, support and implement economic development and human services programs for Empowerment Zone residents by forming collaborative partnerships with all stakeholders.”

Fn.1.

Lamb-Hale had to “immerse herself for

months in municipal law to ensure that Detroit's plan met all federal regulations and requirements necessary to obtain grants from the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development. Only a handful of communities were slated to receive the nod, so everything had to be precise.”

Fn.2.

Continued next page...

Lamb-Hale's Background

Deputy General Counsel, U.S. Department of Commerce

Managing Partner, Detroit Office, Foley and Lardner, L.L.P.

Leader of the Bankruptcy Group, Dykema Gossett

EDUCATION

B.A., University of Michigan
J.D., Harvard Law School

What you really need to know about Lamb-Hale

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While the program had reported to the federal government in its application to have one of six federal empowerment zones that private entities had pledged \$1.97 billion to the project, the Detroit Free Press claimed that its review of pledge letters came \$265 million short of that total. Ms. Lamb-Hale's answer was that they did not have time to itemize them.

"It's not like we had a database or a computer printout by category," said Nicole Lamb-Hale, a lawyer with Dykema Gossett who helped the compile the commitment figures. "We didn't have that kind of time. The commitments were coming in at the last minute, within the last week." Fn.3.

Detroit insisted that they had \$1.97 billion, though they could not itemize the pledges and the Clinton Administration still awarded them the federal empowerment zone.

In a 2001 report by Robin Boyle and Peter Eisinger of Wayne State University, the Detroit Empowerment Zone is held up as the model of the failure of the program. Fn.4.

Foley and Lardner L.L.P., a National Law Firm

Ms. Lamb-Hale was the first African-American woman to hold such a high profile position with a Detroit law firm. While there she focused on bankruptcy law and was a part of F&L's Automotive Industry Team. The firm represented several creditors (suppliers) of GM and Chrysler during their bankruptcy. Her father, Rawleigh Lamb, was an executive with Chrysler in the 1990's. She represented Pilot Industries, Inc, and Medifacts International. She also represented the Wayne County Airport Authority. Shortly before she decamped to the Counsel's office of the Commerce Department, Delta Airlines and the Airport Authority announced that they were talking about \$100 million dollars in runway and taxi-way improvements at Detroit Metro.

"The federal government will pay for 75 percent of the work, and the authority will bear the remaining 25 percent, and its budget comes from landing fees provided by the airlines." Fn.5.

Law School and Barack Obama

Ms. Lamb-Hale was a classmate and friend of Pres. Barack Obama at Harvard Law and graduated with him in 1991. She decided to go to law school in order to help African-Americans after watching the March on Washington, but ended up in bankruptcy law, claiming:

"Bankruptcy represents the last general practice that involves business transactions and litigation... Through this work you get an appreciation for what businesses need and identify telltale signs of trouble." Fn.6.

She was an early supporter of the Obama's presidential bid and one of the spearheads behind Obama's Michigan campaign for change. She eventually gave a total of \$6,982 to the President between contributions to Obama for America and Obama's Victory fund.

Sources for further reading:

Fn.1. *About Us*, Detroit Empowerment Zone website. Available online at: <http://www.detez.org/about.htm>. (Accessed February 10, 2010.)

Fn.2. *40 Under 40*, CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS, September 25, 1995.

Fn.3. Roger Chesley, *A Tally of Zone Pledges Finds City Off by Millions*, Detroit Free Press, April 11, 1995 at 1A.

Fn.4. Robin Boyle and Peter Eisinger, *The U.S. Empowerment Zone, The Evolution of a National Urban Program and the Failure of Local Implementation in Detroit, Michigan*, Draft paper, Wayne State University, May 17, 2001. Available online at: <http://www.sbi.dk/euraworkshops/papers/workshop5/boyle.pdf>. (Accessed February 10, 2010.)

Fn.5. Sherri Begin Welch and Bill Shea, *Delta wants \$100 million in runway improvements at Metro Airport*, Week on the Web, CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS, May 29, 2009. Available online at: <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20090529/FREE/905299986#>. (Accessed February 10, 2010.)

Fn.6. Maureen McDonald, *Nicole Lamb-Hale*, CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS, October 8, 2007 at 23.

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