

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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Chief of Staff,
National Credit Union Administration



WHF Member Spotlight – February 2021

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Hometown

Wallingford, Connecticut

Fun Fact

When I was in high school, I read the “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” by Ernest Hemmingway, one of my favorite stories of all time. It made me want to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, which I finally did in 2005. The next mountain I’d like to climb is the Matterhorn.

Describe your journey in the financial services industry and how your career has evolved to your current position.

My journey in financial services policy began when I landed my first job on Capitol Hill fresh out of law school. I was highly motivated by work to improve the well-being of the Hispanic community, and I had the good fortune to be hired by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez. The Congresswoman was on the House Banking Committee, and I was given the opportunity to work on public housing and other issues. I quickly learned how important and impactful financial services policy is to all American, and I decided that would be the focus of my career.

My experience in financial services policy has been wide-ranging and driven by the mission of each organization I have worked for. I currently have the honor to serve as Chief of Staff at the National Credit Union Administration. My work at the NCUA began in July 2019 as a Senior Policy Counsel for now Chairman Todd M. Harper.

Prior to joining the NCUA, I served as the head of the Office of Legislative Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. In this role, I managed the CFPB’s communications and interactions with Congress.

During my time on the Hill, I worked on major pieces of financial services legislation including the Credit Union Membership Access Act, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. While serving as Counsel for Banking Committee Chairman Dodd, I was an integral part of the team that led staff negotiations and the drafting of Title X of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Financial Protection Act, which created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

During my 15 years on Capitol Hill, I gained bicameral Congressional experience working for Chairmen Christopher J. Dodd and Tim Johnson as Counsel on the Senate Banking Committee; Senator Evan Bayh as staff director of the International Trade and Finance Subcommittee and Banking Committee Counsel; Congressman Jim Maloney as

Legislative Director and financial services policy aide; and starting out with Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez as Legislative Director and financial services policy aide.

I also worked for Banco Popular as Vice President for Government Affairs, where I led the bank's Washington office. I was drawn to Popular because of its mission to provide banking services to underserved communities and my own background as a first generation Latina.

What do you love most about what you do?

There are three things that I love about what I do. First, I am driven by a desire to help people, so I love working to help make sure that our financial system is strong and consumers are protected. There are also some credit unions that really follow the people helping people mission of the credit union industry, and I enjoy working with them. Second, I love the people I work with. My immediate team is awesome, and I've met a lot of amazing and smart people at the NCUA. Last thing, I love learning, and I've had the chance to learn a lot during these last 20 months at the NCUA.

Hobby(ies)? Reading. I'm currently reading "Daring Greatly" by Brene Brown. Traveling. My goal is to travel to all 50 states plus the U.S. territories. Theater. I've had a subscription to the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company for almost 20 years.

How long have you been a member of WHF?

I have been a member of WHF for about 15 years.

Please describe your involvement with WHF.

I served on the WHF Board in 2007-2009. During that time I helped to organize brown bag lunches and the annual conference. I also currently attend events and have introduced speakers. Most recently, I introduced Mary McDuffie at a virtual breakfast event.

What have you gained from being a member?

I have gained some very close friendships through WHF. I've also learned a lot substantively and professionally from the programs that I have participated in or helped to organize.

How do you make the best use of your day? (think techniques to enhance productivity, time management, time out, meditation/prayer, etc.)

I make lists. Lists help me to stay organized, and I feel a sense of accomplishment when I check something off my list. I'm also an early riser and a morning person, so I'm able to accomplish a lot of focused reading and writing before 9:30 am. And, I stay connected with friends and my professional network. I try every day to touch base with a few work colleagues or friends in my professional network, including by meeting for virtual coffee in the morning.

Who or what inspires you?

My daughter inspires me more than anyone else. She is very smart and funny, and I know that she watches everything I do and listens to everything I say. She inspires me to be the best version of myself and to constantly grow to keep up with her.

My father was a huge inspiration and always supported my dreams. He came to the United States when he was a teenager. He was brilliant, and he worked very hard to give us opportunities that he didn't have.

And, Senator Chris Dodd inspired me to public service. My father was a Peace Corp volunteer, and I remember meeting Senator Dodd at a return Peace Corp volunteer meeting in Middletown, Connecticut that I went along to with my father. The Senator's passion for public service and helping people really moved me and inspired me to public service.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

When I first started working in Washington, someone shared this adage with me: *Don't get mad, don't get even, just get better.* Those words resonated with me, and I have always tried to improve myself and not get bogged down with negative sentiments.

Who do you look up to the most and why?

I would have to say that I look up to my father the most because of everything that he went through in his life, every obstacle he overcame, and for how hard he worked for my family.