Chief of the Month: Max Weinstein, Massachusetts

Each month, the Center for Consumer Protection will provide an article about an Attorney General’s Office Consumer Protection Chief.

Thanks very much to the NAGTRI Center for Consumer Protection for making me the Consumer Protection Chief for the month of March. March features National Consumer Protection Week, March Madness, and the Ides of March – what a month! Except that the weather in Boston is terrible.

Speaking of which, I am the Chief of the Consumer Protection Division in the Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey. It is quite a privilege to work for Attorney General Healey, who is an inspiring leader and an accomplished advocate for civil rights and consumer protection. She is also very good at basketball.

Although this is my first job in government, I have been working on consumer protection issues for the entirety of my legal career. My first job out of law school was at the curiously-named Brooklyn Legal Services Corp. “A” (there is no “B”) in the East New York neighborhood of Brooklyn. As a staff attorney, I represented low-income homeowners who had been victims of deeds theft or fraudulent property flipping schemes. I next moved from New York to Boston to join the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, where I was a clinical instructor and a lecturer on law. During my time at the Legal Services Center, several of our cases went all the way to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, including U.S. Bank v. Ibanez, 458 Mass. 637 (2011), a case which stands for the proposition that if you are going to foreclose on someone’s mortgage, you actually have to own the mortgage. I know this sounds common-sensical now, but it was considered quite surprising at the time.

I joined the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office as Consumer Protection Chief in 2015 and it is, without question, the best job I’ve ever had. There have been quite a few highlights. We persuaded the federal government to cancel all of the $30 million in outstanding federal student loans for students of a failed for-profit school called American Career Institute. We led a coalition of 20 states and D.C. in suing the Department of Education for delaying a rule that, among other things, prohibits for-profit schools who elect to receive federal funds from using mandatory arbitration clauses and we won on summary judgment. We sued Equifax over its massive data breach and got the first decision ever under the Massachusetts data breach law.
I would be remiss if I did not include prominently in these highlights the opportunity to meet so many colleagues from offices all across the country at our bi-annual NAAG Consumer Protection Conferences. It is always invigorating to discuss issues of mutual concern and to hear about the new and exciting work that others are pursuing. Maybe the conference will even be held in Boston someday – although I do not recommend doing it in March.