
Ward and Smith, P.A. Expands Government Relations Practice

July 5, 2012

Ward and Smith, P.A. announced today that it continues to position its government relations team for success with the addition of Angie D. Harris as the Firm's new Director of Government and Media Relations and Heather Barrett as its new Government Relations Assistant. Ms. Harris and Ms. Barrett will come on board during July and immediately will begin assisting clients with state government and legislative issues.

"These additions make us uniquely qualified to serve clients with state government and legislative issues from any of our five North Carolina offices. While our Government Relations Team has long been strong and successful in advocating for our clients, Ms. Harris and Ms. Barrett will make it even stronger. In fact, we are the only North Carolina-based law firm with five offices across the state that possesses this caliber of government relations professionals," said Kenneth R. Wooten, Co-Managing Director for Ward and Smith.

Ward and Smith, the successor to a New Bern legal practice founded in 1895, has a long history of lobbying for clients facing state government and legislative issues. The Firm's government relations team participates in legislative lobbying and agency actions at all levels. The Firm has lobbied for complex legislation and has participated in drafting legislation in Congress and the North Carolina General Assembly. The government relations team also supports clients in dealing with state and federal agencies and their leaders, including the Governor and the North Carolina Congressional delegation. Ms. Harris also will contribute a unique North Carolina perspective to the Firm's highly active practice that involves military-related economic development initiatives and representing community interests related to the Department of Defense.

"More than ever, our clients count on us to provide the analysis and access needed to participate in the political and legislative process. Our services will be greatly enhanced now that Ms. Harris has joined the Ward and Smith government relations team," said Albert R. Bell, a Ward and Smith attorney and a senior member of the government relations team.

J. Troy Smith, Jr., an attorney and member of the government relations team added, "Ms. Harris brings the experience and dedication required to represent clients with issues before the General Assembly, the Governor's Office, cabinet agencies, and the Council of State. I am excited about what she offers to our current and future clients."

Ms. Harris has been at the center of North Carolina politics for more than 20 years. She served on Governor Jim Hunt's leadership team as his Deputy Chief of Staff and Press Secretary. Her career also includes 12 years of law firm lobbying experience, most recently as leader of the North Carolina government relations practice at the Williams Mullen law firm. In addition to her service with Governor Hunt, she has worked for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

Hugh R. Overholt, a senior Ward and Smith attorney and policy advisor, said, "Ms. Harris's experience and our Ward and Smith team of government relations attorneys provide clients with the extensive knowledge and bench strength needed to lobby on important issues. Her addition adds a whole new dimension to our ability to serve clients with North Carolina governmental issues."

Ms. Harris's media experience includes implementing client communication plans, acting as a spokesperson for clients during crises, and six years as a newspaper reporter. Samuel H. Poole, a senior member of the Firm's government relations team

with extensive state, federal, and international policy experience, said, "Ms. Harris makes us even stronger in our ability to deal with a variety of communications issues. She will be an important part of our ability to represent clients, set up media events, and provide consultation on community relations and crisis management."

A. Charles Ellis, Co-Managing Director of the Firm, said that Ms. Harris's "experience as a newspaper reporter and her public relations work in state government will significantly benefit Ward and Smith's clients. We are extremely proud and happy to have her and Ms. Barrett join us."

In addition to her government service and client representation, Ms. Harris was vice chair of her former firm's Economic Development Team and currently is a member of the North Carolina Professional Lobbyists Association, the Government Affairs Committee of the North Carolina Technology Association, and the statewide team focused on preparing North Carolina for the next round of Department of Defense base realignments and closures.

Ms. Barrett is a Waynesville, North Carolina native and a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. She has worked with Ms. Harris on government relations issues for nearly two years. While employed with her former firm, Ms. Barrett monitored legislative committees and prepared reports for clients that were used to assess political and legislative issues. She will continue to support Ms. Harris as well as become an integral part of the Ward and Smith government relations team.

Ward and Smith is a full-service law firm based in North Carolina with more than 80 attorneys and offices located in Asheville, Greenville, New Bern, Raleigh, and Wilmington. Its established network of attorneys and professionals focuses on responsiveness, client service, and dedication to the practice of law. The Firm's lobbying reach extends to both Raleigh and Washington, DC. Attorneys in the government relations team bring a range of complementary experiences including service as a senior Department of Defense appointee, the Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, senior Congressional staff, and policy advisors to some of North Carolina's top corporations and non-profits as well as large multi-national corporations.