

A Bigger Impact

Desire to Make a Difference Led Belsan to an Impressive Career

By Annie Flachsbarth

While some may feel a successful, 10-year career with the U.S. Department of Justice might allow you to sit back and rest on your laurels, **Timothy M. Belsan, '09**, chose to do just the opposite. In 2022, he took on a new challenge as the assistant deputy enforcement director with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

“The higher you climb on the ladder, the harder it is to pivot to something else,” Belsan said. “Despite the challenge, I was interested in broadening the reach of how many people I could impact and jumped at the opportunity when it arose.”

Belsan had worked his way up to the highest ranks within the DOJ as the director of the Office of Immigration Litigation. Belsan’s work has mostly focused on prosecuting war criminals, human rights violators, spies, and terrorists who concealed their crimes during the naturalization process, as well as litigating other immigration-related cases. While that work is important, moving to the CFPB affords him the opportunity to have an even broader impact.

Created after the 2008 financial crisis, the CFPB is dedicated to making sure consumers are treated fairly by banks, lenders, and other financial institutions.

“We are all consumers in some respect. We all rely on credit reports, loans, credit cards, bank accounts. Our team helps ensure that all of it functions correctly,” Belsan said. “An error at a big bank or credit agency could impact millions of people.”

The impact he can have in government is possible in part because of the help he had with law school – he received the J.L. Weigand, Jr. Notre Dame Legal Education Trust Scholarship during all three years at Washburn Law.

“I was on the fence about law school, but ultimately, that’s what brought me to Washburn Law – having a full-ride scholarship and a stipend on top to cover living expenses,” Belsan said. “It made it possible for me to attend law school but not rack up a ton of debt, which is what allowed me to go into public service.”

While at Washburn, he was the editor-in-chief of the Washburn Law Journal. It’s also where he eventually met his wife, fellow Washburn graduate, **Asha Plattner, AS '08, BA '09**. They now reside in Maryland and have two children, a four-year-old daughter, Mira, and a three-year-old son, Mekhi.

After graduation, Belsan clerked for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Deanell Tacha for two years.



Timothy M. Belsan, '09

Tacha sat on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, so Belsan traveled to Denver every other month where he found himself surrounded by fellow clerks who had graduated from law schools across the country.

“The other clerks talked a lot about job plans. Many were hoping to get on with the Department of Justice,” Belsan said. “I hadn’t considered it

as a serious possibility until then, and it became a realistic opportunity because of the clerkship.”

In 2011, Belsan was hired at the DOJ through its honors program and moved to the Washington, D.C., area. During his time with the DOJ, Belsan received numerous awards, including the Civil Division’s Rookie of the Year Award, the Attorney General’s Award for Distinguished Service, and the Civil Division’s Special Commendation Award. In 2020, Belsan was awarded the Gears of Government Award by the Office of Management and Budget, in recognition of “exceptional delivery of key outcomes for the American people.”

A zealous advocate for government service, Belsan believes Washburn’s competitive tuition rates help students enter the workforce with a lower debt burden – creating more opportunities to enter into public service.

“It helps so that graduates don’t have to take a job that pays six figures because of student loans. Instead, they can pursue a job that they want to do and will find fulfilling,” Belsan said.

“Many of the people with whom I went to law school had an interest in public service,” Belsan said. “Many wanted to practice family law, work for legal aid, or specialize in another area that they viewed as making a difference in society. That was a very common theme among a lot of my classmates.”

According to Belsan, Washburn Law is the perfect place for attorneys who want to see that positive difference.

“One of the great things about Washburn Law is you get the training you need to hit the ground running,” Belsan said. “That, combined with being in the capital city, creates a lot of opportunities to make a difference.”