

Maurene Comey, a Prosecutor in Epstein Case, Joins New York Law Firm

Maurene Comey is joining Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler. She was abruptly fired by the Trump administration last year after a career as a top federal prosecutor.

By **BENJAMIN WEISER**

Maurene Comey joined a law firm in New York City as a partner on Wednesday, months after the Trump administration abruptly ended her career as a federal prosecutor overseeing high-profile cases.

Ms. Comey, 37, will work on white-collar defense cases as well as complex civil litigation, according to the firm, Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler.

As an assistant U.S. attorney in Manhattan, she was known for taking on some of the office's most significant prosecutions, including those against Jeffrey Epstein, Ghislaine Maxwell and Sean Combs, the music mogul known as Diddy.

Over nearly a decade at the U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of New York, she handled 11 jury trials and also served as a co-chief of the unit that investigates violent and organized crime.

Ms. Comey later oversaw public corruption cases, including the bribery trial of Robert Menendez, the former Democratic



JEFFERSON SIEGEL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Maurene Comey was named a partner at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler on Wednesday. Ms. Comey challenged her dismissal from her job as a federal prosecutor last year.

senator from New Jersey, who is now serving 11 years in prison.

But her career as a federal prosecutor ended when the Trump administration dismissed her without giving her a reason July 16. She has sued the U.S. government, challenging her firing. The day after being fired, she wrote to her former colleagues urging

them to not give into fear, calling it "the tool of a tyrant."

"What we've seen over the last year is a complete destruction of the space between politics and the Department of Justice," Ms. Comey said in an interview on Monday. She added that a series of "norm-shattering events" in the department had "made all

the clearer just how important a robust defense bar is to stand up to government overreach.”

Ms. Comey did not specify the events she was referring to. But in addition to her own dismissal, the Trump administration has fired other federal prosecutors in Manhattan, Washington and elsewhere.

And Mr. Trump has ordered Attorney General Pam Bondi to investigate his perceived enemies, like Letitia James, New York’s attorney general, and Ms. Comey’s father, James B. Comey, the former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In November, Mr. Trump demanded that the department investigate ties between Mr. Epstein and prominent Democrats, a matter Ms. Bondi quickly assigned to the Southern District — Ms. Comey’s former office.

In the lawsuit Ms. Comey filed challenging her dismissal, she argued that no plausible expla-

nation existed for her firing other than because she is Mr. Comey’s daughter or “because of her perceived political affiliation and beliefs, or both.”

The lawsuit, which the government has asked a judge to dismiss, is pending.

Patterson Belknap’s alumni include Robert Morgenthau, the longtime Manhattan district attorney; Michael B. Mukasey, the attorney general under President George W. Bush; and several current and former federal judges.

The firm, which was founded in 1919, has about 200 lawyers and works from a single office in Midtown Manhattan. Ms. Comey said that she was attracted to the firm’s culture of service and the strength of its litigation department. “I love trying cases, so that was a big draw to me,” she said.

As a federal prosecutor, she was a member of teams that handled some of the highest-profile

cases in the Southern District. These included the case of Mr. Epstein, who died awaiting trial, and Ms. Maxwell, his co-conspirator, who was convicted and is serving a 20-year-sentence.

As for Mr. Combs, he was convicted of transportation to engage in prostitution and is serving a 50-month sentence. Mr. Combs was acquitted on counts of sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy, the most serious charges he faced.

Ms. Comey said she could not comment on the Justice Department’s recent release of millions of pages of Epstein-related files and the debate that has ensued.

But there was one topic she said she could address.

“The team that I was a part of always prioritized respecting the dignity, privacy and rights of the victims,” Ms. Comey said. “We felt privileged to be able to seek justice for them.”