



Member Spotlight

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On this page we share interviews by Board Member and Labor & Employment Law Committee Co-chair Tejash V. Sanchala, Esq. with WCBA members about their experiences and insights. The articles were originally published in the *Member Spotlight* column in the WCBA's *Westchester Lawyer* magazine. We hope you are inspired by their stories!

Tejash welcomes your comments and suggestions for future columns. He can be reached [here](#).



Hon. Robert A. Spolzino

Tejash: What is your current job and practice area?

Robert: I'm now a partner at Smith, Buss & Jacobs, LLP, which will shortly become Spolzino, Smith, Buss & Jacobs, LLP, with offices in Yonkers, White Plains, Manhattan and Long Island. I concentrate my practice in the areas of civil litigation and appeals, municipal and education law and litigation, land use and environmental matters.

Tejash: How did you become a litigation and appellate attorney?

Robert: I started my career as a court attorney in the Appellate Division, Second Department. After I clerked for Judge Kenneth Lange in the Westchester County Court and Justice Leon Lazer in the Appellate Division, I opened my own office in Mount Kisco. Based on my background, litigation and appeals was the area where I could bring real value to my clients.

Tejash: What is one of your favorite legal success stories?

Robert: In 2007, I dissented in *Matter of Riverkeeper v. Planning Board of the Town of Southeast*, 32 A.D.3d 431 (2d Dep't 2006). I dissented from a decision reversing a judgment issued by Justice Frank Nicolai deciding a number of SEQRA issues. A year later, the Court of Appeals reversed, essentially on my dissent. 9 N.Y.3d 219 (2007).

Tejash: Who were some of your legal mentors?

Robert: Presiding Justice Milton Mollen was my first boss when I worked in the Appellate Division. He was such a great example of a lawyer who spent his career in and around government in many capacities. I also worked for Justice Isaac Rubin from Westchester, who was one of the nicest, most scholarly lawyers I've ever met. He got me started thinking about a judicial career.

Tejash: If you were not practicing law, what would you be doing?

Robert: Being involved in government or not-for profit work full time. A lot of my practice involves representing public entities – local governments and school boards—and quasi-public entities—not for profits. I also spent 11 years on the Board of Northern Westchester Hospital, four as chairman. So working to achieve public goals is fun and important to me.

Tejash: What might people be surprised to learn about you?

Robert: That I wanted to be a doctor until I did a service project at the local hospital in high school and learned that doctors have to deal with sick people.

Tejash: What do you splurge on?

Robert: Books. My wife keeps asking me what I'm going to do with all of them after I read them. The real answer is nothing. I just like keeping them around to re-read from time to time.

Tejash: What are some of your favorite vacation trips?

Robert: Disney World. My wife's parents live in Florida about an hour and a half from Disney, so we've been taking our son to Disney since he was little. I have a picture of him in a Star Wars rebel pilot uniform at age 4 and with Mickey at age 21.

Tejash: What are three things you can't live without?

Robert: Diet Pepsi, ice cream and baseball.

Tejash: What is one of your favorite things to do in Westchester?

Robert: Enjoy the many great restaurants, especially in my home town of Mount Kisco.

Tejash: What is the best advice you have ever received?

Robert: The best is Churchill's statement that "Luck is where preparation meets opportunity." Second best is Charlemagne's statement to Pippin that, "It's smarter to be lucky than it's lucky to be smart."

Tejash: What is the best decision you made to improve your business?

Robert: Jumping off a cliff twice, first in starting my own practice in Mount Kisco in 1987 and, more recently, leaving a big firm to join a smaller operation.

Tejash: What advice would you give to new lawyers?

Robert: Take chances. Put yourself in a position where you have to develop business. It's the key to success in suburban practice and it's hard to learn late in your career.

Tejash: What is one of your future ambitions?

Robert: To learn to sail and have time to do it.

Tejash: What is your favorite part of being involved with the WCBA?

Robert: The opportunity to meet and know other lawyers in the community. It teaches you that as hard as we might fight for our clients, we don't have to be antagonistic to each other.