

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

TWENTY YEARS

at New York University School of Law

Biography of Nicole Austin-Hillery Director and Counsel, Washington, D.C. Office



Nicole Austin-Hillery is the first Director and Counsel of The Brennan Center's Washington, D.C. office which she opened in March 2008. In her role, Ms. Austin-Hillery has overseen the growth and development of the Brennan Center's advocacy, strategic communications and policy development work in Washington. Ms. Austin-Hillery is the organization's chief liaison to Congress and the Administration. Her day to day work includes oversight of the Washington office operations and staff, serving as the chief advocate for the Brennan Center on a host of justice and democracy issues and coordinating coalition work with other civil rights, social justice and democracy organizations in Washington.

Priority issue areas of Ms. Austin-Hillery's portfolio include voting rights, racial and criminal justice advocacy and reform, indigent defense and vote restoration for those who have lost the right to vote. She also supports work in the Money and Politics issue area on a limited basis. Ms. Austin-Hillery provides both strategic and advocacy counsel ranging from legislative analysis to policy development.

She serves as both a media spokesperson and frequent presenter on Brennan Center issues. Ms. Austin-Hillery has written opinion pieces for several publications including Roll Call, The Root, CNN.com and BillMoyers.com and has been a contributing writer to several advocacy publications. Notably, she recently authored a chapter in the American Bar Association's 2016 volume of *America Votes* entitled "Voter ID as a Form of Voter Suppression." She has testified before state and local legislative bodies as well as submitted testimony for Congressional hearings and serves as a frequent speaker on a host of public interest issues.

Ms. Austin-Hillery has significant litigation experience having practiced with the law firm of Mehri & Skalet, PLLC as part of the firm's civil rights employment class action practice, and as the George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Law Fellow at the national office of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, where she focused on housing litigation and policy. She is also a former Wasserstein Public Interest Fellow at Harvard Law School. Ms. Austin-Hillery currently serves on the boards of directors of Common Cause and the Washington Council of Lawyers, and is President-Elect of the Washington Bar Association. She is an appointed member of the ABA Advisory Committee on Election Law and serves as co-chair of the ABA Criminal Justice Section's Defense Function Committee. She is an adjunct civil rights professor at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law. Ms. Austin-Hillery is a graduate of the Howard University School of Law and Carnegie Mellon University.