

FDL MEMBERSHIP: THE VALUE OF THE FIREDOGLAKE LEGAL TEAM

As you may know by now, last Tuesday morning Firedoglake rolled out its brand new membership program. Both Jane Hamsher and Teddy Partridge have eloquently explained what this means to both you and Firedoglake. And we are all in it together, and for the absolute worthiest of purposes: an independent media, kick ass activism, intelligent analysis and stimulating discussion.



There is friendship and camaraderie here at FDL, without question; but, let's face it, the real draw is the quality content. The quality of content was always superb; but it has grown, over the years, to be truly breathtaking across the board. For all of the broad spectrum of coverage here at FDL – from the biting humor and sardonic delight of TBogg, to the cutting edge intersection of entertainment, pop and light politics of Lisa Derrick at La Figa, to the unparalleled and award winning investigative reporting, insight and analysis of Marcy Wheeler at Emptywheel, to Jane Hamsher constantly moving the spectrum balance at FDL Action, to the wonderful guests and hosts at Book Salon, to the collective at FDL Main – there is simply nothing in the dead tree press or blogosphere like Firedoglake.

What I want to focus on for a moment, because it is the area I know best, is the incredible legal team you have working for you here. Firedoglake does not just have regular bloggers, or even working journalists, interpreting complex and often confusing legal cases, decisions and situation. No, Firedoglake has a team of professional attorneys at work both in front page posts, and behind the scenes for consultation by all the other journalists to

consult with and draw upon. It is a powerful combination that is unmatched anywhere else, and one of the many reasons this site is worth your hard earned dollars of support and membership.

Cynthia Kouril is a former Special Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of New York, former counsel to the Inspector General for the N.Y.C. DEP where she investigated threats to the NY City water supply and other environmental crimes, as well as public corruption and fraud, former Examining Attorney at the N.Y.C. Department of Investigation and is expert on fraud, white collar fraud, real estate law and criminal law issues. In addition to all the other issues she weighs in on, Cindy is doing the hard work on mortgage fraud, and has been huge in a continuing series on foreclosure fraud. Perhaps most notable is that Cindy was, all the way back in 2009, the first person to publicly explain the insurmountable and egregious problems with MERS separating the loan note from the deed; thus laying the groundwork for all that has followed in the last two years.

Masaccio, who has let it be known his real name is Ed Walker, is a recovering attorney who spent decades specializing in bankruptcy, secured transactions, financial instruments and business law. He is also a former securities regulator with keen insight on all things financial and economics related. Masaccio told us how the US Attorney in New York was consciously letting statutes of limitation on securities fraud cases expire, gave a primer on the legality of credit default swaps, discussed the legal issues in enforcing promissory notes and, of course, has been all over the foreclosure fraud issues.

We also have others trained in law, like Scarecrow, who was for many years senior counsel for a state energy agency, advising on and drafting state energy policy, legislation, reports, decisions, orders, and managing rulemakings for energy standards, facilities permitting and environmental reviews. He was the

first to publicly warn the Governor of California and California Legislators about how the Enron-based rules would screw California electricity consumers and turn the sector on its head. He was exactly right on that as time and criminal trials have proven. Having done policy work for so long, he likes to claim he is not attorney; but his keen sense on regulatory matters and the annoying questions he asks of those in power belie that thought. Look no further than this weekends nuclear emergency in Japan for the benefit of Scarecrow's knowledge, but he weighs in on a broad range of regulatory issues, including the all important banking industry.

The last member of what is considered the nucleus of the Firedoglake legal team is not a lawyer at all, she is better than that. The indefatigable and Hillman Award winning "Emptywheel", Marcy Wheeler. Best known for her groundbreaking live-blogging of the Scooter Libby trial and her weedy analysis of Bush's torture memos. Marcy is the independent journalist who schooled the mighty New York Times on the extent of the waterboarding torture occasioned upon Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. She is the author of *Anatomy of Deceit*, which served as a primer of the CIA leak case. She has also worked to hold the Bush Administration accountable for its illegal warrantless wiretapping and, along with some semi-recovering criminal and civil rights attorney named bmaz has given the best coverage anywhere on the seminal al-Haramain case. And do not forget the priceless work from Mary at Emptywheel.

You should also know that when I call this a "team", it is that in the truest sense of the word. In addition to the work each person does on their own posts, there is interconnected group discussion and analysis not only between individuals, but as a larger discussion group in which all participate. Through these modalities, we not only cross check and add to each others work, we also serve as a sounding board for all FDL contributors in an attempt to bring you, the

member, the best and most incisive information and analysis possible. This is a battery of broad based legal skill and analysis that is simply not available anywhere else, whether in the print media or digital media.

And, yet, for all the talent, drive and desire, we here at FDL are nothing without you and your participation. FDL is driven by the energy, passion, and intellectual prowess of the members of this community, from the crowdsourcing and analysis in the comment threads, to the heads up on breaking news, to emails behind the scenes, to the financial support for the effort.

This enterprise cannot work without you. You are already a part of Firedoglake; make it official by becoming a contributing member. Join the greatest show in the blogosphere today! Do it now, and do it large; there is no better value anywhere!