

SETON HALL | LAW

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Lessons in Leadership on the 50th Anniversary of Watergate
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Elizabeth Holtzman

Co-Chair, Government Relations Group

Herrick Feinstein LLP

The Role of the House Judiciary Committee in Limiting Abuses of Presidential Power

Elizabeth Holtzman is a distinguished figure in American politics and government relations, with a career spanning more than two decades in public service. Her journey at Herrick, where she specializes in government relations and litigation, is the culmination of a remarkable career that began with her election as a U.S. Congresswoman. Serving four terms, Holtzman gained national recognition for her role on the House Judiciary Committee, where she cast a historic vote to impeach President Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal. She also played a pivotal role in the passing of influential legislation, such as the Refugee Act of 1980 and the Equal Rights Amendment extension, highlighting her commitment to civil rights and gender equality. Moreover, Holtzman's tireless efforts in exposing and bringing Nazi war criminals to justice showcased her dedication to upholding moral and legal standards.

Subsequently, Elizabeth Holtzman continued her trailblazing career, becoming the first woman elected as the District Attorney of Kings County (Brooklyn). During her eight-year tenure, she achieved notable successes, including arguing successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court and pioneering innovative approaches to prosecuting sexual assault and environmental crimes. Her advocacy also extended to ending racial discrimination in jury selection. Later, as the first and only woman elected Comptroller of New York City, Holtzman managed billions of dollars in pension funds and issued significant city bonds. Her commitment to public safety led to the proposal, later signed into law, holding gun manufacturers liable for injuries caused by illegal firearms.

Holtzman's impact on government policy and her dedication to justice continued in her appointments by U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to panels addressing sexual assault in the military and by President Bill Clinton to oversee the declassification of Nazi and Japanese Imperial War Criminal Records. Her extensive contributions to American politics are further reflected in her numerous books, articles, and appearances as a commentator on television and in documentaries. With honors, four honorary degrees, and recognition for her significant contributions to American politics, Elizabeth Holtzman remains a symbol of unwavering dedication to justice and public service.