

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT (BOB) A O'NEIL

Robert (Bob) A. O'Neil, a longtime practitioner before the Federal Regulatory Commission, died after a brief illness on January 7, 2022. For more than forty years, he served public power and member-owned utilities, negotiating numerous transactions to ensure low cost and reliable power for his clients and their retail members. He helped to shape national electric energy policies on electric transmission access and deregulation, especially the Regulatory Fairness Act of 1988 on which he testified in Congress.

Bob was a proud Bostonian who, after matriculating at the Boston Latin School, went on to obtain his undergraduate degree and law degree from Boston College. Bob began his legal career in the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the U.S. Army, International Law Division, and spent several years stationed in Japan (laying the ground for some of his best stories).

In 1980, Bob was a founding principal of Miller, Balis & O'Neil, which became the Washington office of McCarter & English in 2014. He was a tough negotiator with a wicked sense of humor. He was good at math, and he had vision. He gave all new attorneys at the firm a reverse polish notation (RPN) HP-12C calculator and then quizzed them on the inch-thick operating manual. Nicked and scratched, most of those calculators survive today. In 1988, Bob steered his small law firm to be one of the first to have personal computers on attorney desks. Of course that investment proved to be a cost-savings move, one of many that he implemented. Most famously, he purchased a second-hand PBX phone system from a bankrupt hotel to handle the firm's telecommunications for more than a decade. Other ideas were less spectacular. All this reflected incredible business acumen for a lawyer. He often attributed this talent to his part-time job keeping the books for a hotel while in law school.

He was devoted to the wellbeing of his law firm family as well as his nuclear family, leaving behind his wife Barbara of 45 years, a son and a daughter who each are practicing attorneys, and five grandchildren.