

# The elaw 60-second interview

## Elizabeth S Harvey



I have practised environmental law in Chicago, Illinois for over thirty years, first with an environmental regulatory agency and now, for many years, in private practice. London and Chicago are my two favourite cities, and I would love to split my time between the two. In my spare time, I enjoy doing historical research and volunteering at a no-kill animal shelter. I am a huge baseball fan, and I share my Chicago White Sox season tickets with friends (not everyone from Chicago is a Cub fan!).

### **What is your current role?**

I am a partner at Swanson, Martin & Bell, LLP, a mid-sized nationally recognized trial firm in Chicago, Illinois. I serve as the chairman of the Environmental Practice Group. The focus of my practice is environmental litigation in federal and state courts, as well as before administrative agencies. I also counsel clients on regulatory compliance and other environmental issues as they arise, as so often happens.

### **How did you get into environmental law?**

In law school, the classes that piqued my interest the most were the environmentally-related courses. I took Environmental Regulation, Oil and Gas Law, Water Law, and many more, which gave me a peek into the thought-provoking world of environmental law. Early in my career I worked for an environmental agency that had a dual role of promulgating regulations and ruling on enforcement cases. I then moved into private practice, where I practise exclusively environmental law. I am glad I took those law school courses, because they led me to an interesting career where my days are never dull.

### **What are the main challenges in your work?**

My biggest challenge is keeping up with the ever-changing landscape of environmental laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines. It's not unusual for a client to have to comply with, for example, slightly differing air emission requirements under federal, state, and local laws. Sorting through the multiple requirements and ensuring I am up to date is an ongoing challenge.

### **What environmental issue keeps you awake at night?**

The overarching issue of climate change keeps me awake at night. The world is failing miserably to adequately address climate change. The consequences of climate change impact everyone, on a scale that is almost unimaginable. Our society knows how to address climate change, but our collective efforts at making changes have been woeful.

### **What's the biggest single thing that would make a difference to environmental protection and well-being?**

If we could somehow make environmental compliance seem practical to the "average person", that would give a massive push to addressing critical issues such as climate change, waste reduction and disposal, water pollution, and all of the other myriad environmental challenges the world faces. Some of the challenges seem so overwhelming that it's hard to know where to start, so sometimes we do nothing.

### **What's your UKELA working party of choice and why?**

I have not yet had the opportunity to participate with any working party, but hope to do so soon.

### **What's the biggest benefit to you of UKELA membership?**

I gain a broader picture of environmental law and issues by following UK issues and regulations, as well as UKELA activities. It is important, and enjoyable, for me to have perspective and knowledge beyond US law.