



Keith M. Harper

U.S. Ambassador (Ret.)

607 14th Street, NW

Suite 900 , Washington , DC USA 20005

t 202.508.5844 | f 202.315.3241

kharper@kilpatricktownsend.com

Services

Government & Regulatory

Litigation

Native American

Native American Litigation

Ambassador (ret.) Keith M. Harper rejoined the firm in February 2017 following his service as the United States Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland since 2014. Ambassador Harper became the inaugural Senior Non-Resident Fellow on National Security at the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs in March 2017. He is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, focuses his practice on Native American affairs, litigation, and international clients from the private as well as the public sector. Throughout his career, he has represented tribes and individual Indians. Among other matters, Ambassador Harper since inception of the case, represented the plaintiff class of 500,000 individual Indians and served as class counsel in the landmark Indian trust funds lawsuit, *Cobell v. Salazar*. Ultimately the case settled for \$3.4 billion in 2009, which represents the largest settlement of a lawsuit against the United States in history.

Previously, Ambassador Harper was a partner with the firm in its Washington, D.C. office where he continues to practice today. From 2010 to 2014, Ambassador Harper served as Commissioner on the President's Commission on White House Fellowships. He also served as a Chair for Native American policy in the 2008 Obama For America presidential campaign and then as a member of the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team in the Energy & Environment Cluster. Prior to joining the firm, he was Senior Staff Attorney and head of the Washington, D.C. office of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) from 1995 to 2006. During his tenure at NARF, he also taught Federal Indian Law as an adjunct professor at Catholic University Columbus School of Law and at American University Washington College of Law. Ambassador Harper served as a Supreme Court Justice on the Supreme Court of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians from 2007 to 2008 and as an Appellate Justice on the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Court from 2001 to 2007.

While attending New York University School of Law, Ambassador Harper served as Articles & Notes Editor of the *Journal of International Law & Politics*, was a Root-Tilden-Snow Scholar and a Fellow at Center for International Studies. After graduation, he was law clerk to the Honorable Lawrence W. Pierce on the U.S. Court of Appeals

for the Second Circuit.

Ambassador Harper is the recipient of numerous awards and other recognition, including: National Congress of American Indians Special Recognition Award (2017); Cherokee National Statesman Award (2014); American Bar Association "Human Rights Hero" (2014); election to membership at the American Law Institute (2012); the Native American Bar Association, DC, Award for Significant Contributions to Indian Law and Policy (2012); *LawDragon 500* (top 500 lawyers in United States) (2010); selection as one of 50 "Most Influential Minority Lawyers in America" by the *National Law Journal* (2008); Service Award by Annual People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference for Achievements and Commitments to Justice (2010); *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business* (2009-2013, 2019); *The Best Lawyers in America*® (2009-2013, 2020); Washington D.C. "Super Lawyer" by *Super Lawyers* magazine (2010, 2012-2014, 2019); N.Y.U. Black, Latino, Asian Pacific Islander Alumni Association Outstanding Professional Achievement Honor (2009); Rockefeller Foundation Next Generation of Leaders Fellow (2002-2004); University of Arizona School of Law - IPLP Colloquium Senior Fellow (2003); Henry H. Fowler Fellow on Public Policy, Roanoke College (1999); Skadden, Arps Fellow (1995-97).

Follow Mr. Harper on Twitter: [@AmbHarper](https://twitter.com/AmbHarper)

Experience

Served as class counsel for plaintiff class of 500,000 individual Indians against the Department of Interior and Treasury Department arising out of the government management of their trust lands and assets in a prolonged lawsuit culminating in a \$3.4 billion settlement agreement. Served as lead counsel for numerous tribes suing the United States for mismanagement of tribal trust funds and natural resources.

Served as lead counsel for one of the most successful gaming Tribes in the country in a case before the National Labor Relations Board, defending the Tribe's sovereign authority to apply its own Tribal employment and labor laws instead of federal law. Also represent Tribe on campaign strategies prior to and during elections.

Served as lead counsel successfully representing a tribe and individual allottee members of the tribe suing the Western Area Power Administration for trespass under the Federal Tort Claims Act after WAPA's Right-of-Way expired.

Successfully represented Billy Frank Jr. and Frank's Landing Indian Community in contract litigation dispute. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a lower court's decision that had foreclosed the Nisqually Indian Tribe's (Nisqually) challenge to an agreement between Frank's Landing, the state of Washington, and another tribe, the Squaxin Island Tribe regarding taxation of cigarette sales at Frank's Landing.



Education

New York University School of Law, J.D. (1994)

University of California, Berkeley, B.A., Sociology and Psychology (1990)

Admissions

District of Columbia (1997)

New York (1995)

Court Admissions

New York Supreme Court (1995)

U.S. Court of Federal Claims (1996)

U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (1997)

U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit (2000)

U.S. Supreme Court (2000)

Clerkships

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit - Honorable Lawrence W. Pierce

Professional & Community Activities

Women at the Table, Board Member

American Constitution Society, Board Member

Americans for Democratic Action, Past Board Member

American Red Cross, National Diversity Council, Past Chair

World Organization for Human Rights, Past Board Member

Native American Bar Association of Washington, D.C., Past President

Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights, Past Board Member

Insights

[News Releases](#)

Record-Breaking Recognition for Kilpatrick Townsend in *The Best Lawyers in America*® 2020

August 15, 2019

[News Releases](#)



Fifth Circuit Court Rules in Favor of Native American Children and Families, Reaffirms that the Indian Child Welfare Act is Constitutional

August 12, 2019

[News Releases](#)

Twenty-Two Kilpatrick Townsend Attorneys Recognized in 2019 Washington, D.C. Super Lawyers

June 7, 2019

[News Releases](#)

Kilpatrick Townsend at the 2019 INTA Annual Meeting

May 14, 2019

[News Releases](#)

Kilpatrick Townsend Achieves Top-Tier Recognition from Chambers USA 2019

May 2, 2019

[News Releases](#)

Motion for Stay Granted in High-Profile Indian Child Welfare Act Case

December 3, 2018

[News Releases](#)

Official Statement: Indian Child Welfare Case Brackeen v. Zinke Ruling

October 8, 2018

[News Releases](#)

Statement Regarding Ruling Striking Down the Indian Child Welfare Act

October 5, 2018

[In The News](#)

U.S. News & World Report: "14 Law Schools That Trained Famous Lawyers" features Keith Harper

September 18, 2018

[Alerts](#)

U.S. Supreme Court Opens Door to Sports Betting

May 15, 2018



[Publications](#)

Tribes Mobilization On Climate Change Gathers Steam

March 27, 2018

[Publications](#)

Cobell Buy-Back Must Advance Indian Country Interests

August 24, 2017

[In The News](#)

Larry Roberts and Keith Harper Featured in Indian Country Today Media Network

June 12, 2017

[In The News](#)

Former U.S. Ambassador Rejoins Kilpatrick Townsend In D.C.

February 2, 2017

[News Releases](#)

Ambassador Keith M. Harper Rejoins Kilpatrick Townsend

February 2, 2017