

NICK HARRISON, JD, MBA, PMP

Raised by a single mother on public assistance, Nick Harrison ran for Oklahoma State Legislature at the age of twenty-one as the youngest candidate in his state. He served as an airborne paratrooper stationed in Alaska – returning to complete college. He was the first in his family to earn a bachelor's degree when he graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma in 2005. He started law school at Oklahoma City University. He attained a #1 ranking in his class while serving as the Chair of the Student Senate during his first semester. Then, his studies were interrupted when he was deployed with the National Guard.

Nick Harrison went on to earn a Juris Doctor and a Master of Business Administration specializing in Entrepreneurship in 2011 between overseas tours to combat zones in Afghanistan and in Kuwait / Iraq. Upon his return from his last deployment, he was selected as a Presidential Management Fellow and he relocated to the district – where he started his own law practice. He scored high enough on the Oklahoma bar exam in 2012 to be admitted to the Washington DC bar on a motion by the court in 2015.

Nick Harrison has cultivated his law practice around service to small businesses and non-profit organizations in the community. He earned a reputation as an attorney who was not afraid to take on challenging cases against larger institutions. He received a lot of press coverage regarding the first case he took after being admitted to the bar – where he successfully defended a student journalist's rights to public records in *Stipek v. the University of Oklahoma*.

At the U.S. Small Business Administration, he helped launch the White House's Boots to Business Initiative, a program providing entrepreneurial training to servicemembers returning from overseas and separating from the military. He worked with Small Business Development Centers, SCORE Chapters, Women's Business Centers, and Veteran's Business Outreach Centers and traveled 21,364 miles to conduct fourteen site visits in eight states. He helped secure the first dedicated funding from Congress and helped oversee the delivery of classes to 6,000 participants at over 150 military bases in 2013-2014.

He went on to serve on the boards of the Modern Military Association of America and the Southwest Veterans Business Resource Center. He also served on several military contracts – helping run the U.S. Department of Defense's \$25 million Mentor-Protege Program spanning eight service components and defense agencies and helping manage the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's \$2.8 billion portfolio focused on CBRNE threats to identify opportunities for small businesses and non-traditional defense contractors.

While working on these contracts, Nick Harrison founded the Fidelis Law Group – a law firm specializing in class action litigation. He worked closely with some of the nation's top product liability attorneys to attain a spectacular case record – handling seventy-six cases over the past three years and recovering over \$8,250,000 for his clients. He also continued taking work on other

government contracts. He served in a series of progressively more responsible project management roles at the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security. He also joined the boards of two other non-profit organizations serving the local community.

He continued to serve as a reservist in the National Guard as well. In 2013, he was selected for a JAG position supporting the Director of the National Guard Bureau. Although he had been diagnosed with HIV one year earlier, he had been told by several people that everyone knew the military's HIV policies were outdated and that they were in the process of rewriting the regulations. So, he requested a waiver and an exception to policy – hoping to finish his twenty-year military career as a commissioned officer.

When the rewrite was abruptly cancelled and his request was subsequently denied, Nick Harrison led a campaign challenging the military's outdated HIV policies. He met with the offices of fifty-four members of the U.S. House and Senate Armed Services Committees – putting together a coalition of advocacy groups that included the Human Rights Campaign, the National Urban League, AIDS United, Lambda Legal, the National Minority AIDS Council, the Modern Military Association of America (f/k/a Outserve-SLDN and AMPA), the Hepatitis B Foundation, and the Center for HIV Law and Policy and securing favorable language in the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act.

After he agreed to serve as a named plaintiff in impact litigation seeking changes to the military's policies, he appeared at various events in Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington DC and he gave press interviews to a variety of media outlets including *Bloomberg*, *Vice*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *New York Times*. As a result of this media attention, the U.S. Department of Defense backed away from its attempt to kick out 1,823 HIV+ servicemembers under the "Deploy or Get Out" policy. Finally, in April 2022, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia finally struck down the military's discriminatory HIV policies in a landmark decision – ruling that there was no rational basis for the military's ban and applying the equal protection clause to people living with HIV for the first time in history.