

ROBERTA ACHTENBERG

b. July 20, 1950

GOVERNMENT

Despite Senator Jesse Helms's vocal refusal to vote for "that damned lesbian," Achtenberg became the first out presidential appointee confirmed by the Senate.

"The ability to be in public life has been enormously positive to our movement."

Roberta Achtenberg serves as a commissioner of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. She is the first openly gay presidential appointee confirmed by the Senate.

Achtenberg was born in Los Angeles. Her father emigrated from the Soviet Union and her mother from Canada. The family owned a neighborhood grocery store. Achtenberg earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, where she met her future husband. The couple moved to Salt Lake City, where Achtenberg earned a law degree from the University of Utah.

In 1979, after divorcing, Achtenberg met Mary Morgan, an attorney later appointed to a judgeship in the San Francisco Municipal Court. The couple became partners and had a son.

Achtenberg was first elected to public office on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. As an out lesbian elected official, she garnered national attention. During the Clinton administration she served as Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. In 1993, she was appointed Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Despite Senator Jesse Helms's vocal refusal to vote for "that damned lesbian," Achtenberg became the first out appointee confirmed by the Senate. Despite Ku Klux Klan opposition, she developed an integrated public housing project in a previously all-white Texas town.

In 2011, President Obama named Achtenberg to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

She serves as a corporate advisor in community development to the Lennar Corporation and is a director of the software company AJWI. Previously, she was a staff attorney for the Lesbian Rights Project of Equal Rights Advocates. She is a cofounder of the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

Achtenberg received a GLAAD Visibility Award and was recognized by the San Francisco Business Times as one of the Bay Area's "Most Influential Businesswomen."



lgbt
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2012 – A Project of Equality Forum