

Partnership for a Strong New York

An Interview with Kathryn S. Wylde, President and Chief Executive Officer, Partnership for New York City, New York

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming her current post in 2000, Kathryn Wylde served as the founding president and CEO of the nonprofit New York City Housing Partnership and as founding president and CEO of the New York City Investment Fund, the Partnership's economic development arm, a position she still holds. She is a member of the boards of directors of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Biomedical Research Alliance of New York, the Lutheran Medical Center, the Manhattan Institute, and the Economic Development Corporation of the City University of New York. She also sits on the advisory boards of the Center for an Urban Future, the CUNY Business Leadership Council, and the New York State Legislature Task Force on School Governance.



Kathryn S. Wylde

COMPANY BRIEF With a mission to maintain the city's position as a global center of commerce, the Partnership for New York City comprises more than 200 partner CEOs from New York City's top corporate, investment, and entrepreneurial firms who work in partnership with city and state government officials, labor groups, and the nonprofit sector to enhance the economy and culture of the city. The Partnership focuses on research, policy formulation, and issue advocacy at the city, state, and federal levels by leveraging its network of CEO partners. Through its affiliate, the New York City Investment Fund, the Partnership directly invests in economic development projects in all five boroughs of the city.

Will you define the mission of the Partnership for New York City?

The Partnership was established by David Rockefeller at the end of the 1970s, when the city was struggling to emerge from a period of fiscal crisis and urban

decay. The idea was to mobilize private-sector leaders to bring their expertise and resources to bear on the biggest challenges facing the city and, for the most part, it has worked. Over the past 30 years, New York City has continued to evolve as a world city. Its business leadership is no longer a small club of *Fortune* 500 leaders, but rather a dynamic gathering of hundreds of executives with global reach. Whether they are heads

of U.S.-based corporations or CEOs of the U.S. division of foreign companies, the Partnership has successfully engaged these leaders in public-private initiatives designed to ensure that New York continues to thrive.

What do you look for when deciding on new members?

We welcome CEOs who are top leaders in their industry sectors and are strongly committed to New York City. Mayor Mike Bloomberg, who was a member of the Partnership before being elected mayor, is a great example of the quintessential partner who not only built a successful business based in New York, but was so committed to the city that he ran for mayor and won.

Are there different levels of membership within the Partnership?

Yes. In addition to our full partners, we have associate partners from smaller entrepreneurial companies who represent the next generation of leadership. Also, under the David Rockefeller Fellows Program, every year our members recommend 12 to 18 promising young executives who spend a year being introduced to the city. They learn how it works, and meet government and business leaders who become role models for them. This is how the Partnership ensures that New York City retains the outstanding civic business leadership that's helped position New York at the center of world commerce and culture.

What other key programs is the Partnership involved in?

Under the leadership of Henry Kravis, the Partnership established the New York City Investment Fund for the purpose of supporting projects and businesses that are important to the city's economy. It focuses on innovation in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. New York is a large city, where it's sometimes difficult for individual entrepreneurs to get the support they need to grow their companies. The Investment Fund provides that support.

We also have a major commitment to public education. New York City's critical asset is its amazing, diverse talent pool. The city has the most productive workforce in the world, comprising workers who speak almost every language. In order for that to continue, we need a huge investment in education. Our organization supports the public-education system, and makes sure that public schools, and public and private universities, benefit from the city's business leadership.

Are you satisfied with the relationship between public- and private-sector leaders?

The experience of 9/11 created a unique opportunity for public-private cooperation. The attacks on New York City were attacks on the American economy, and that mobilized a private-sector commitment to work with government to recover, rebuild, and ensure that New York City does not suffer irreparable harm.

The result has been an enormously successful public-private partnership. Eighty percent of the jobs that were lost on 9/11 have been brought back to the city. Leaders from the public and private sectors have gone to Washington, DC together to ensure that the federal government understands the impact of the attacks, the security threats, and the need for federal assistance so that New York City can deal with insurance, security, and antiterrorism issues. We've never had a stronger public-private partnership than we have today. ●