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Universities, Businesses Turn to This Lawyer for Political Prep

In the Media | September 4, 2025

Bloomberg Law

Business is brisk for Washington whisperer Michael Bopp, whose specialty preparing besieged CEOs for congressional testimony is in high demand as President Donald Trump and fellow Republicans take aim at public media, universities and major corporations. Congressional Republicans, eager to carry out Trump's agenda, are investigating organizations considered out of step with the president. Bopp, an attorney at Gibson Dunn whose clients have included everyone from former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey to GOP mega-donor Harlan Crow, has become a vital player in their defense. "This administration is really driving a lot of the investigations on the Hill," Bopp, a former congressional investigator, told Bloomberg News in a recent interview. "Committee chairs see what the Trump administration is focused on, and they're focusing largely on the same things." Bopp spent hours this summer in the firm's mock hearing room prepping Joseph Selsavage, the interim CEO of 23andMe , to field lawmakers' hostile questions on how the bankrupt company would protect the genetic information of some 15 million customers. Just weeks later, he advised an Ivy League university under investigation by the House Judiciary Committee, which could ultimately decide to compel schools to testify. He succeeded in keeping a different university off an earlier witness list before the House Education Committee. The stakes are high. Of the seven university presidents to testify before the House earlier this year, only two still have their jobs. **Public Media** Bopp played a central role in one of the biggest legislative battles of the year: Republicans' ultimately successful plan to defund National Public Radio. When Katherine Maher, NPR's chief executive, was called to testify in March, she turned to Bopp. Republicans had surfaced old social media posts from Maher, which they said underscored their broader argument that NPR discriminates against conservative viewpoints and shouldn't receive federal dollars. Bopp suggested Maher address those criticisms before lawmakers even had a chance. "It wasn't that Katherine was going to retreat from her prior politics, but what was important was to set the tone early," Bopp recounted. Maher ultimately said she regretted some of her previous statements before defending NPR's reporting as unbiased. "It really took one of the most challenging issues, if not the most challenging issue, off the table for the remainder of the hearing," Bopp said. She ultimately emerged from the congressional hearing without making much news – a win for anyone facing that level of public scrutiny. Maher said she felt a "sense of relief" after the hearing, which she attributed to Bopp's extensive preparation. "We knew not all members would change their perspectives on our work, but we sought to convey our authentic commitment to our public mission and mandate," Maher said. Congress in July passed party-line legislation to rescind $9 billion in public media funding, a hit that will likely lead to layoffs and station closures across the country. But Bopp said his goal is to mitigate damage where he can. His firm is continuing to represent NPR in its litigation against the administration. "The funding restrictions were preordained unfortunately," he said. "But I think Katherine had an impact. There were a number of Republicans who had second thoughts about the rescission package." Bopp, who describes his specialty as "esoteric," has been a central behind-the-scenes player in some of the other biggest inflection points under Trump this year. **Extensive Prep** Gibson Dunn's mock hearing room in downtown Washington, DC, is complete with a dais, witness table, lights and microphones for witnesses to practice their testimony. Before clients even step into that room, Bopp preps answers to anticipated questions and shows them video of the good, bad and ugly of congressional testimony. Then, they begin short

Related People

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mock sessions over several weeks. But, he acknowledged, there’s nothing quite like the real thing. “It’s very hard to replicate the energy and the tension and the anxiety of an actual congressional hearing,” Bopp said. Reproduced with permission. Copyright 2025 Bloomberg Industry Group 800-372-1033 https://www.bloombergindustry.com

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