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Carrie J. Hightman is executive vice president and chief legal officer for NiSource Inc., a Fortune 500 energy firm. Her responsibilities include all legal functions, as well as environmental, health and safety. She serves as a member of the company's senior management team.

Prior to joining NiSource, Hightman served as President of AT&T Illinois (formerly SBC). In that position, she was responsible for all regulatory, legislative, governmental and external affairs activities, as well as community and industry relations, throughout Illinois. During her tenure at AT&T, Hightman led the company through a series of important public policy initiatives that helped AT&T evolve from a traditional telephone company into a provider of diversified communications and entertainment services.

Prior to joining AT&T, Hightman practiced telecommunications and energy law for more than 17 years. She was a partner in the Chicago law firm of Schiff Hardin, where she led its Energy, Telecommunications and Public Utilities practice group. Hightman is Vice Chair of the Telecommunications Committee of the Public Utility, Communications and Transportation Law Section of the American Bar Association and past Chair of the Public Utility Law Section of the Chicago Bar Association.

Hightman began her career in the public sector in 1983, serving as Staff Counsel at the Florida Public Service Commission. In 1986, she served as associate counsel at the Florida Office of Public Counsel, handling a variety of public utility cases on behalf of consumers.

Hightman earned her B.A. from the University of Illinois and her juris doctor from Florida State University. In February 2007, Hightman was appointed Chair of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the State Universities Retirement System of Illinois. She also serves on the boards of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Urban League, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation and the Chicago Area Foundation for Legal Services.