



National Legal Aid &  
Defender Association

**2024**

**BEACON**

**OF**

**JUSTICE**

**Awardees**



## 2024 Beacon of Justice Awards

NLADA's Beacon of Justice Awards honor members of the pro bono legal community who are tireless advocates for equal justice. Each year the awards highlight one area of pro bono work that aligns with NLADA's mission of equal access to justice.

The 2024 Awards feature law firms who are addressing issues related to civil and human rights. At NLADA, we understand the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and other characteristics that may create interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Work that focuses on reducing these injustices is vital, and we want to shine a spotlight on firms addressing these complex challenges in their pro bono practice.

Understanding that civil and human rights is a broad theme, we are particularly interested in learning how the private bar actively engages in projects to advance civil and/or human rights. Civil rights is defined as guarantees of equal social opportunities and equal protection, regardless of race, religion, or other personal characteristics, based on laws, while human rights are guarantees and protections based on one's rights as a human being.

It is the work that focuses on the protection from discrimination, injustice, and inequality on the national and global level that we seek to highlight. Eligible law firms will have provided pro bona legal assistance to families, individuals, organizations, community groups, or others, between January 1 and December 31, 2023.

**Watch the 2024 Beacon of Justice award video on the [NLADA YouTube channel](#).**

The total number of Pro Bono hours  
for civil and human rights issues by  
2024 Beacon of Justice winners:

**983,820+**



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# Akin<sup>SM</sup>

Throughout 2023, Akin’s pro bono work intentionally addressed low income and vulnerable individuals, particularly asylum seekers, incarcerated persons and families facing housing insecurity. By leveraging the firm’s resources, expanding trauma-informed lawyering trainings and creating teams of pro bono attorneys specializing in distinct pro bono practice areas, Akin was able to effectively serve more than 1,000 individual and institutional pro bono clients in 2023. Akin’s 2023 pro bono representations included the following matters:

When the Afghan government fell in the summer of 2021, Afghan nationals in the U.S. faced grave danger if they returned to Afghanistan. Thousands of individuals and families in Afghanistan were evacuated to the U.S. through “Operation Allies Welcome.” These individuals stood alongside the U.S. for over two decades, supporting our military and promoting democracy and human rights. Their support of the U.S. made them Taliban targets. Since the situation evolved so rapidly, there was little time for U.S. legal services organizations to prepare for the unprecedented increase in asylum and humanitarian parole applications from Afghanistan. Akin’s pro bono partner Steve Schulman has been deeply involved in asylum and humanitarian work for many years. Steve started

getting calls from Afghans in the U.S., many referred by the Afghan Embassy. Akin assembled teams of attorneys and business professionals and launched the Akin Afghan Project within days. When the core group of clients shared Steve’s cell phone number with friends seeking representation, Akin quickly developed more formal immigration trainings, listservs, document libraries and weekly immigration office hours so that firm attorneys could efficiently undertake additional Afghan asylum cases. Akin currently represents more than 200 individual Afghan clients in immigration matters, helping hundreds more family member derivative clients enter or remain in the U.S. on humanitarian grounds.

Since the 2016 Supreme Court decision in *Montgomery v. Alabama*, Akin attorneys have spent more than 8,000 hours representing clients previously sentenced as juveniles to life in prison without the possibility of parole. In connection with this resentencing work, Akin partnered with the Washington, D.C. based Sentencing Project, The Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights, The Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth, the Juvenile Law Center and other legal service organizations working toward juvenile justice reform.

In 2023, in conjunction with Akin’s partnership with the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, the Akin team has advocated on behalf of over a dozen individuals and families to enable them to obtain or retain safe and affordable housing — often in the face of eviction or voucher termination.



**“We are proud of Akin’s longstanding commitment to doing our part to close the justice gap. From representing those sentenced as juveniles to spend the remainder of their lives in prison, to helping families secure safe, affordable housing, our colleagues undertake matters that impact the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.” — Steven Schulman, Pro Bono Partner**

# Arnold & Porter

The advancement of civil and human rights has been a central tenet of Arnold & Porter’s pro bono program since defending the rights of those persecuted during the McCarthy hearings and arguing for a right to counsel in *Gideon v. Wainwright*.

Arnold & Porter has a longstanding commitment to preserving the right to vote by combatting voter suppression laws, challenging gerrymandering and felony disenfranchisement, and ensuring the right to participate in democracy free from discrimination. In 2023, we led efforts to protect voting in states across the country. We achieved significant victories in Wisconsin, where heavily gerrymandered legislative maps were invalidated, and Arizona, where extensive portions of legislation restricting voter registration were stricken down. In North Carolina, we are representing the local NAACP in challenging a racially discriminatory law requiring a limited set of photo IDs to register to vote as a violation of the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution.

We also focus our pro bono work on protecting the basic human rights of access to food, housing, and medical care. In 2023, our attorneys, in coordination with Justice in Aging and the New York Legal Assistance Group, the Urban Justice Center, and Empire Justice Center, reached a major settlement with the Social Security Administration that impacts the rights of individuals appealing termination or changes to their Supplemental Security Income benefits. COVID-19 hit hardest on the millions of low-income elderly and disabled people who rely on federal Supplemental Social Security Income for a minimal subsistence income. During COVID, SSA office closures prevented recipients from making required reports regarding their income and assets to ensure the uninterrupted receipt of benefits. After reopening, SSA reduced benefits for those who failed to report, even though there was no way to make those reports, causing massive suffering for this vulnerable population. Our class action lawsuit, which was filed over 4 years ago, led to a settlement in which the SSA agreed to waive the overpayments, to make refunds to about 250,000 recipients, and

to fix the waiver system to protect the continued payment of benefits during pendency of an appeal.

We secured a major Supreme Court victory in upholding the right of people who benefit from federal spending programs, including 87 million Medicaid recipients, to sue when denied proper care. Our client sued a state-run nursing home under §1983, for negligently providing her father with psychotropic drugs, and improperly transferring him to distant nursing facilities. Our attorneys presented a compelling textual argument that the Federal Nursing Home Reform Act, a spending statute that confers individual rights, provides the ability to enforce those rights through private action. In a 7-2 vote, the Supreme Court agreed. By clarifying that no one is above the law, the case ensured that millions of Americans may now enforce their rights.

Our firm also seeks to protect equitable access to reproductive healthcare for all genders and sexual orientations. Our impact litigation included preserving the right to critical medication abortion by challenging regulations restricting mifepristone distribution and defending the Kansas state constitution’s protection of a pregnant person’s right to bodily autonomy. We are also a founding member of the Abortion Defense Network which provides counsel to abortion providers nationally regarding the post-Dobbs environment, advising on corporate structure, HIPAA compliance, regulatory considerations, tax, real estate, and other issues.

Our work further seeks to protect the rights of children and family relationships to be free from discriminatory government interference and highlights the right of families to stay together. We lead the effort to obtain damages under the Federal Tort Claims Act for the severe emotional distress the federal government inflicted on families who were forcibly separated at the border. In many cases, the families were unable to communicate for months and had little information about each other’s whereabouts or well-being. After surviving and prevailing, in part, in summary judgment motion practice in 2023, the families’ case will proceed to trial in 2024. We also secured a judgment for our client who brought an action against the New York City Administration for Children’s Services under the due process and equal protection clauses of the New York and federal constitutions after her newborn child was improperly removed from her care. The complaint detailed extensive discriminatory practices on the part of ACS in the removal of children from Black parents and families.



*Brian Song, Partner.*

## BakerHostetler

**A**t Baker Hostetler, pro-bono work is a critical part of our culture and our everyday practice. One recent example is a case on behalf of a young man named Jaskirat Singh, who came to Baker Hostetler through our relationship with the Sikh American Veterans Alliance, or SAVA. SAVA's mission is to promote the service of Sikh Americans in the United States military.

Jaskirat Singh wanted to join the United States Marine Corps. Unfortunately, he faced a barrier to entry. That is, the Marine Corps would not allow him to serve while wearing a turban and having long hair and an unshorn beard.

We began our representation in August of 2021, seeking a religious accommodation, which we submitted in November of 2021. The Marine Corps partially denied that request by February of 2022, stating that Jaskirat could serve in the Marine Corps with a turban and an unshorn beard and hair only if he completed boot camp, and only

if he attended boot camp by cutting his hair, shaving his beard and not wearing a turban. In April of 2022 we brought suit from federal court in Washington, DC, along with our litigation partners at the law firm of Winston and Strawn, Becket Law, and the Sikh Coalition.

Our suit was premised on violations of the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. We sought a preliminary injunction that would have allowed Jaskirat and two other recruits to commence training at boot camp with the Marine Corps without having to sacrifice their religious faith tenets. The district court denied our plenary injunction, and we sought an immediate appeal to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in December of 2022.

The Circuit Court granted our preliminary injunction finding that our clients were suffering and will continue to suffer grave, immediate and ongoing injuries to exercise of their faith. In August of 2023, I had the privilege of attending Jaskirat's graduation from San Diego Marine Corps boot camp. He was the first fully-accommodated Sikh American to join the United States Marines.

## Baker McKenzie.

**T**he Baker McKenzie Pro Bono practice has launched and participated in a number of high-impact initiatives that address racial and gender-based disparities through the protection of LGBTQ+ rights, ensuring equal opportunities within communities, and combating racism to list a few ways. Baker McKenzie leverages an extensive network of public interest partners, legal aid groups, LGBTQ+ rights organizations, companies, clients, friends and non-profits to execute anti-racist work that address racial inequities within our local communities and on a national and global level.

Through our innovative, strategic approach, we address issues that exist at the intersectionality of marginalized identities, and are able to have a profound impact because we have found that equity and inclusion work is rarely singular and often does not operate in silos.

Through our revolutionary, globally-recognized Justice in Action (JiA) initiative, 3,300+ global volunteers, including 800+ in-house team members from 65+ leading multinational companies came together

(virtually) to deliver meaningful contributions to several high-impact projects related to racism, mental health, justice crossing borders, and child welfare.

Cutting-edge legal work executed through the JiA sprints include:

- Real Rights Legal Guide for Youth Interacting with Police: We are creating a first-of-its-kind, city-specific guide for youth who come into contact with the police, containing information about state, federal and municipal laws and how young people can assert their rights. This project is focused on big cities where black and brown children, youth and adults engage with the police more often and with dangerous results.
- Kids in Mental Health Detention: Children and youth are increasingly facing detention for issues surrounding mental health. Unfortunately, in many jurisdictions that detention is unregulated and mirrors criminal detention, often times with less legal parameters around legal rights in entering detention, during and, ultimately, leaving detention. Given that youth of color are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, it's thought that youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth are equally overrepresented in the mental health detention settings. This project focuses on the gathering and analysis of laws and regulations around when children and youth can be detained solely for issues related to mental health.

**“We are privileged to get to partner with outstanding organizations like the National Network for Youth, Lambda Legal’s Children in Out-Of-Home Care Project, the Global Initiative on Justice with Children and so many other outstanding organizations committed to justice for children and youth. Through our Justice In Action Pro Bono Sprints, we get to unite in-house legal department volunteers with our Firm’s professionals to better serve the legal needs of these organizations and many more to assure that access to justice is a reality regardless of who you are or where you come from.”**

— Angela Vigil, Pro Bono Partner and Executive Director of Global Pro Bono



Pro bono is a priority at Beveridge & Diamond (B&D). Over half of all B&D attorneys, both principals and associates, participate in the firm’s pro bono efforts. The firm undertakes a variety of pro bono work, ranging from amicus briefs on racial justice and the rule of law, immigration and refugee support, to landlord-tenant issues, and criminal clemency cases.

B&D represents the plaintiff in a lawsuit aimed to rectify the denial of legal rights to the Creek Freedmen and their descendants by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the U.S. Department of Interior.

The descendants of Black Creek Freedmen (persons enslaved in the Muscogee Nation and freed after the Civil War) have been denied rightful citizenship in the Muscogee Nation based on their race. The lawsuit seeks to uphold the rights guaranteed by the Creek Treaty of 1866, aiming to restore the rightful place of the Creek Freedmen as citizens of the Muscogee Nation.

B&D has a longstanding partnership with Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights Coalition, which matches migrants and asylum seekers at risk of detention or deportation with private lawyers. In 2022, our work included assisting several Afghan asylum seekers wrongfully detained by U.S. officials, several of whom worked alongside U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan.

Our past work has included representing LGBTQ+ asylum seekers fleeing persecution in their home countries. David Friedland serves on the Board of

**“Beveridge & Diamond is proud of our pro bono efforts as they relate to civil and human rights, particularly with regard to our work for the Creek Freedmen Descendants. Thank you to NLADA for this recognition.”**

**— Madeleine Boyer, Principal and Pro Bono Committee Chair**

Directors, and Washington, DC, Associate Leigh Barton serves on the Legal Advisory Committee. B&D is a member of Lawyers for Civil Justice (LCJ). Washington, DC, Principal John Guttman is B&D’s lead representative to LCJ and works on the LCJ committee that works on issues related to the federal rules. Bina Reddy, the Austin Office Managing Principal, is B&D’s representative on the committee on admissibility of expert testimony. New York Principal Megan Brillault B&D’s representative on the committee on class actions, third party litigation funding and multi district litigation practice.

John Guttman also serves on the Board of Directors of the Defense Research Institute (DRI), and is a past Chair of DRI’s Toxic Torts and Environmental Law Section. DRI advocates for the business/defense community on a variety of issues. In this capacity, John submitted written comments and provided oral testimony before the Advisory Committee on the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure in early 2019 on proposed amendments to Federal Rule 30(b)(6).

The firm also supports organizations that engage in projects concerning civil justice reform, such as the Council for Court Excellence, and are involved in various pro bono work some of which supports civil justice reforms.

## CRAVATH

Cravath dedicates significant resources to assisting individuals who are incarcerated—the stories of impact are remarkable, with life-changing outcomes for our clients. This holistic work, encompassing both direct representations and systemically focused class actions, constitutes a major portion of our broader pro bono program. In 2023, 93 attorneys contributed 15,529 hours to these matters, reflecting about 43.5% of our overall pro bono work.

Through our Incarcerated Survivors’ Initiative, Cravath provides counsel to incarcerated individuals who have survived domestic and/or sexual violence, including while imprisoned. We represent clients in matters that include resentencing, parole and civil rights violations. This Initiative is unique in that our lawyers work together to develop expertise not only in the relevant areas of law, but also in the human aspects—emotional and psychological—of representing incarcerated survivors who have suffered prolonged abuse and exploitation.

In 2023, we secured the release of two domestic abuse survivors who were serving 10- and 20-year sentences. Cravath also secured six-figure settlements for three clients who were assaulted while incarcerated.

Cravath is also leading impact litigation to address systemic problems in the criminal justice system. The

firm represents juvenile offenders with life sentences who have been denied parole in a class action lawsuit against the New York Board of Parole for violations of the class members’ constitutional rights. The action seeks to reform the parole hearing process in New York State, drawing on recent Supreme Court precedent establishing that juvenile lifers must be provided with a realistic opportunity for release based upon demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation. We assert that the Board denies juvenile lifers this meaningful opportunity for release and seek declaratory and injunctive relief. While this lawsuit is aimed at institutional reform, 12 Cravath clients have already been released from prison as part of this effort.

Cravath also represents a putative class of inmates at St. Clair Correctional Facility in Alabama—alleging that the dangerous conditions and actions of staff at the prison violate the Eighth Amendment. The Court denied a motion to dismiss and, since that time, Cravath has devoted thousands of hours to fact discovery. We have completed roughly 55 depositions (the vast majority of which were taken or defended by our associates) and have analyzed the records relating to hundreds of violent incidents. We are completing expert reports, and anticipate briefing class certification and summary judgment this spring and summer.

Cravath’s work on behalf of both individuals and classes of people who have been unfairly impacted or victimized by the criminal justice system reflects the multi-faceted approach to change and sustained commitment that has characterized the Firm’s approach to pro bono work throughout our history.



**“From Cravath’s inception, meaningful and challenging pro bono work has been a cornerstone of our practice. We are proud of what we do to ensure that individuals impacted by the criminal justice system are protected from discrimination, injustice and systemic inequality. We are honored to be recognized by NLADA for our efforts.” — Antony Ryan, Pro Bono Partner**



Crowell has focused on several pro bono initiatives this past year focused on Civil and Human Rights, including a continuing focus on criminal justice work, voting rights work and support of Afghan asylum seekers. Crowell's Racial Justice Pro Bono Task Force continued its commitment to taking on pro bono work that promotes racial justice and endeavors to sustain that commitment through quarterly meetings and special firmwide presentations.

As part of its Racial Justice Task Force work, Crowell continues its death penalty work including the Firm's ongoing representation of Crosley Green, criminal defense cases for indigent defendants, and prisoners' rights cases in both Alabama and North Carolina. With the Southern Center for Human Rights, the Firm is handling Petitions for Post-Conviction Release for incarcerated individuals. Crowell also partnered with a commercial client to conduct Innocence Case File Reviews with the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project.

Key to advancing civil and human rights is assuring that the voice and vote of individuals from diverse communities are counted and given weight. Crowell continues to work on several pro bono matters challenging restrictive state voting statutes and state redistricting plans that dilute the vote of communities of color. In 2021, representing a coalition of Black churches in Georgia, Crowell filed litigation challenging recently enacted legislation by the state of Georgia imposing voting restrictions that would restrict or burden voting by communities of color. Crowell is also representing the Georgia State Conference of the NAACP in challenging congressional, state senate, and state house redistricting plans signed into law in November 2021 in Georgia. The complaint alleges that the redistricting plan was enacted with discriminatory intent in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Right Act and constitutes racial gerrymandering in violation of U.S. Equal Protection Clause.

This past year, Crowell also partnered with the ACLU of Maryland to pave the way for the town of Federalsburg, MD to elect the first two Black members of the Town Council in its 200-year history. After several attempts to convince the Town to voluntarily change its election system, and in response to a proposal by the Town to cancel its 2023 election and

**“Crowell is a grateful recipient of the 2024 Beacon of Justice Award. It is humbling to find ourselves among so many deserving award recipients. We remain steadfast in our commitment to work collectively to ensure access to justice and equity in the legal system.” — Susan Hoffman, Partner**

extend the terms of its all-white government leaders for an additional 14 months, Crowell filed a lawsuit on behalf of the local NAACP challenging the Town's election system under the Voting Rights Act and filed for a preliminary injunction to prevent the Town from canceling its election and put in place a plan that would give Black voters equal voting opportunities.

After oral argument, the Court ordered the Town to revise its election system in accordance with Plaintiffs' demands. On September 26, 2023, two Black candidates, including one of the named Plaintiffs, were elected to the Federalsburg Council with the largest voter turnout in Town history.

After the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Crowell partnered with Tahirih Justice Center to provide pro bono asylum representation to a group of women's rights activists evacuated by the U.S. State Department. The firm has taken on multiple gender-based affirmative asylum matters through this initiative.

In 2023, Crowell continued its commitment to Afghan refugees by collaborating with Lutheran Social Services of North Capital Area (LSSNCA) and a commercial client to conduct multiple pro se asylum clinics. Through the clinics, Crowell, LSSNCA and the client assisted over 20 Afghan refugees in filing their pro se asylum applications. The Firm ultimately took on close to a dozen Afghan clients for direct representation through these clinics. Through these initiatives, Crowell has assisted numerous Afghan families in obtaining asylum. One client, a women's rights activist from Afghanistan, was granted asylum after 25 years of lobbying for women's rights in her home country. She fled Afghanistan after receiving threats from the Taliban and is now continuing her advocacy work in the U.S.



In line with Dechert's longstanding commitment to pro bono, the firm's lawyers logged 97,000+ pro bono hours worldwide in 2023. At any given time, the firm had 1,700+ active pro bono matters ongoing (including 750 new matters). A significant proportion of those efforts were aimed at issues surrounding civil and human rights.

For more than a decade, Dechert has partnered with Washington, D.C.-based human rights organization Freedom Now to represent individual prisoners of conscience around the world as pro bono clients and conduct legal, political and public relations advocacy campaigns to gain their release. Since the partnership began, the firm has dedicated 16,300 attorney hours in representing political prisoners in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, Myanmar, Rwanda, Uzbekistan and elsewhere, in many cases securing their release. Dechert recently supported Freedom Now to help free Saba Kord Afshari, an Iranian women's rights activist detained by the Iranian government for protesting compulsory veiling laws, securing a ruling from the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in May 2023.

Dechert has long partnered with The Advocates for Human Rights, a Minnesota-based non-profit organization that champions international human rights standards by enlisting lawyers to carry out in-depth research to determine whether U.N. member states have upheld their commitments to international human rights treaties, particularly in respect to the death

penalty. To date, Dechert lawyers have contributed to 25 stakeholder reports on countries as varied as Belize, Dominica, Ethiopia, Iran, Laos, Myanmar, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Dechert continued name- and gender-change clinics in New York and Washington D.C. to address difficulties that can arise from a mismatch between the given name and appearance of transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary individuals. To date, Dechert has helped 30+ individuals secure legally binding name changes.

After Dechert submitted an amicus curiae brief on behalf of OutRight International, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a ruling in April 2023 in *Olivera v. Peru*, establishing the Peruvian State's responsibility for violations of the right to liberty and public security, access to justice, privacy and equality of LGBTIQ activist Crissthian Olivera on a case of discrimination based on sexual orientation. The court ordered the State to hold an annual national awareness campaign promoting non-discrimination and carry out other remedial actions.

Dechert continued its two-decade commitment to protecting the right to vote by challenging restrictive and discriminatory voting laws introduced in a number of U.S. states. Recent achievements include challenging discriminatory redistricting maps in Florida, Texas, Georgia and Arkansas. In Florida, Dechert represented Miami community organizations, including two chapters of the NAACP, and residents, in challenging Miami's racially gerrymandered 2022 City Commission map, obtaining a preliminary injunction enjoining use of the maps (May 2023) and, after the City adopted a substantially similar new map, trying the case (January 2024); a ruling on Miami's liability is awaited.

**“Dechert LLP is grateful to the NLADA for its leadership and work in trying to ensure equal access to justice in America – and working to ensure excellence in the delivery of legal services to those who cannot afford counsel. We appreciate your support of pro bono initiatives and thank you for recognizing Dechert and other firms for our work in the area of civil and human rights.” — Suzie Turner, Partner**

# DENTONS

**D**entons has a long and proud history of advancing civil and human rights — focusing on the rights of immigrants and refugees, and people in prison.

Dentons was thrilled to host the inaugural 2023 NLADA DEIB Summit and to be part of the LFAA presentation at the Summit. Dentons has been doing this work globally for a long time. For example, Dentons is a founding firm in the European Lawyers in Lesvos project, whereby lawyers volunteer several weeks at a time to provide in-person, direct service to refugees in Greece and Eastern Europe, and has served over 20,000 clients.

Recent relevant examples in the US include working pro bono alongside Brooklyn Defenders Services, Dentons achieved a litigation victory for a Salvadoran migrant wrongly imprisoned by the federal government. While attempting to lawfully enter the US at the Mexican border, our client was detained by immigration authorities who misidentified him (in the face of overwhelming evidence of his true identity) as a Mexican national with a similar name who was deported in 2010. The client was incarcerated (in solitary confinement) for nearly three months. Several agencies failed to conduct a fingerprint comparison, despite being legally required to do so. On the client's behalf, Dentons brought a civil action against the US government and after eight months of litigation secured a \$300,000 settlement for our client.

The Firm won a victory in an ongoing pro bono effort to force the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to improve medical care at state prisons in accordance with a 2019 federal consent decree. The Court ruled that IDOC has still failed to create and implement a plan to bring correctional facilities into compliance.

Working pro bono for almost ten years, Dentons and Morrison & Foerster helped secure a federal jury win for the Center for Justice & Accountability

and a group of Haitian human rights activists. The jury found a former Haitian mayor (living in Boston when the suit was filed in 2017) liable for a campaign of violence against his political rivals between 2007-2009. The jury awarded \$4.5 million to compensate for the violence and \$11 million in damages.

Highlighting our transactional work on behalf of under-served communities is the substantial corporate and real estate advice Dentons provided to the Chicago South Side Birth Center, a Black-owned, midwife-led, birth center on Chicago's South Side. Dentons spent 18 months reviewing the Center's corporate documents, providing regulatory and corporate advice as well as real estate representation crucial to the Center being in a position to open. With only four hospitals on the South Side the Chicago center is a crucial provider of healthcare to low-income mothers in a healthcare desert.

Finally, to shine a light on our work to protect the rights of domestic violence survivors: In 2014, Dentons, Legal Aid Chicago and Ascend Justice teamed up to form the Domestic Violence Appeals Project, which provide appellate representation to individuals inappropriately denied an order of protection. Due to a lack of resources, legal aid providers in Illinois had never been able to appeal a wrongful ruling in the Domestic Violence Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County. As a result, vital provisions of the Illinois Domestic Violence Act (DVA) were not making it into the courtrooms where the laws were intended to govern. Benna Crawford, a Legal Aid Chicago director, described it as "the perfect collaboration of legal aid, domestic violence advocates and pro bono lawyers."

Appealing wrongful rulings is both expensive and time-consuming, the scale and severity of the problem is immense, however many Dentons colleagues are helping ensure the Project succeeds in its mission. Although focused on Illinois courts, the project includes Dentons lawyers in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, San Francisco and Washington, DC. Ten years later, the Domestic Violence Appeals Project has won 16 out of 18 appeals, including three precedent-setting published opinions for applying the DVA.



**D**LA Piper's pro bono mission is to pursue justice in our communities and around the world by advancing gender and racial equality, advocating for children, and combating hunger. This work focuses on protecting vulnerable communities from discrimination, injustice, and inequality, locally and globally.

For over two years, DLA Piper has represented Afghan Women Judges seeking safety and freedom after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. We partnered with the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) Afghan Support Committee, which asked for assistance in responding to the organization's more than 250 Afghan members. DLA Piper organized a global effort to help Afghan women judges seek legal status in the US and elsewhere by assembling a network of firms to take on cases for direct representation. We also offered these judges help with screening for legal options in various countries, advising on immigration options, and connecting Afghan judges and their families with legal representation. Over 300 DLA Piper volunteers have served nearly 500 Afghan clients to

date, dedicating 17,000 hours to this effort. Although the work continues, many families have received asylum protection in the US and elsewhere.

We recently helped an Afghan woman judge who had presided over cases involving serious crimes in Afghanistan and was evacuated to the US because of the retribution she and her family faced from the Taliban. After two years, the judge and her family received asylum. Today, she is an adjunct professor and visiting scholar at a law school and regularly speaks on issues related to Afghan women and members of the judiciary.

DLA Piper has a history of advocating for youth involved in the criminal justice system, including efforts to end life-without-parole sentences for crimes committed as children. One recent win involved the release of a client who had been incarcerated at Angola, the largest maximum-security prison in the US, since 1996. Our client was just 16 years old when he narrowly escaped the death penalty and was sentenced to life in prison without parole for first-degree murder.

In May 2021, two DLA Piper lawyers teamed up with the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights and the Louisiana Parole Project to represent him. At his parole hearing, the team successfully argued that he was not "permanently incorrigible." The parole board unanimously granted parole. After 27 years in prison, the client was released at the age of 44.



**"DLA Piper is very honored to receive this award for its longstanding commitment to supporting civil rights and human rights. One of the ways in which we do this is through supporting and advancing juvenile justice, which disproportionately affects youth from disenfranchised communities. Every effort in the pursuit of civil and human rights is a step towards a more just and equitable society, and we are proud to contribute our time and energy in order to advance this necessary goal." — Alexandria Cates, Associate**

# DORSEY

DORSEY + WHITNEY LLP

**D**orsey has a long and substantial history of doing impactful civil and human rights work. We consistently carry multiple death penalty cases, dozens of asylum cases, and assist with large-scale human rights reports and cases. However, in the last two years we were able to grow a new area of human rights work across almost every one of our offices and departments. Never before have we had so many attorneys, offices, and departments working on a set of human rights cases together in this way.

We're helping Afghans. We're learning about their culture, their lives, their fears, their dreams. We're getting to know their children. We're becoming part of their families. We'll never be the same. In 2022, Dorsey said yes to a request we received from a US nonprofit which operates in developing countries across the world. This nonprofit had Afghan employees whose lives were at risk due to the work they were doing in Afghanistan to support a fair and safe environment for Afghans. The US nonprofit asked if we could help prepare humanitarian parole applications for their employees. They anticipated the work would take about 15 hours per client. We agreed to help 16 clients and their families.

The work did not take 15 hours per client. Rather, it took hundreds of hours per family we assisted. And we are so incredibly proud of our teams for carrying on this work far beyond what we thought the project would be. These clients needed so much more than some simple assistance filling out a couple-page form. They needed us to assist them with wrap-around help in them completely transitioning their lives. This project ended up involving over 60 volunteers, from two of our clients, and across 7 of our Dorsey offices. The work is ongoing.

The original 2022 Afghan project led to one of our volunteers in particular becoming our "Afghan expert" of sorts. Jennifer Block was a public finance lawyer who had just lateraled to the firm the year before from an in-house position. She'd never done formal pro bono work. She'd never done immigration, asylum, or human rights work. But today, two years later, she finds herself with literally hundreds of hours of experience. She has inspired the growth of our

work for Afghans. After becoming involved in the original 2022 Afghan project, she helped us plan and support a legal clinic in Des Moines, Iowa to assist Afghan refugees with their asylum applications.

That clinic involved a majority of our Des Moines office and we volunteered with an in-house legal department. Jennifer subsequently engaged with one of the clinic clients to provide representation at their hearing. She listened to podcasts and researched what music would calm the clients before their hearing. And in 2023 when one of our New York attorneys asked if we could provide assistance to Afghan refugees being helped by Church World Service (CWS), it was Jennifer who jumped in to consult on how we could manage the project and support our volunteers, and she took on one of these Afghan families as well.

The CWS partnership began in February of 2023. CWS is a nonprofit committed to transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. CWS has been providing assistance to a large group of Afghan asylum seekers who are resettling in the New York / New Jersey area. Dorsey put together a team of 23 attorneys and business professionals across 7 offices to provide legal assistance to 8 clients/families through the CWS program. In 2023, we provided over 1,000 hours of assistance to this project. Our assistance involved the preparation of asylum petitions and attending asylum hearing interviews. Afghan asylum seekers are in a special class and receive expedited asylum interviews and decisions. Hearings have been granted for several of our clients through this program and to-date, one client has recently been granted asylum.

The intensity of the work we have done for our Afghan clients has been so impactful. So many people needing so much assistance at one time, in emergency situations, with fast-changing laws and a support system that is still working to organize itself and connect all the resources with those in need. We are so grateful to our star volunteer Jennifer Block for continuing to inspire us to grow and support this work. She has helped bring together a passion across our offices and departments. The Dorsey attorneys working for our Afghan clients communicate regularly, share tips about new resources, and cultural support we can provide to the families. It has been beautiful to witness.

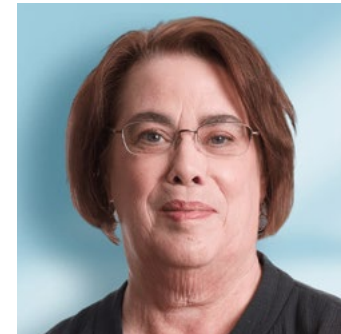


**O**ur commitment to civil and human rights issues impacting low-income and vulnerable individuals, families, and communities shines through our pro bono work. In 2023, our US offices contributed over 45,000 hours of pro bono service, valued at \$37 million. At the heart of our pro bono efforts is a commitment to advocating for low-income individuals and communities of color navigating legal, immigration, and other racially discriminatory systems.

The Fried Frank Civil Rights Fellowship brings together private law firm litigation and public service law by connecting the firm with two of the country's leading civil rights advocacy organizations, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. The Fellowship enables an entry-level lawyer to spend two years as a Fried Frank litigator and two years as a staff attorney with one of these leading advocacy organizations. Additionally, a litigation associate rotates into our externship program at Her Justice every six months, where they provide counsel to low-income women (92% of whom are women of color) in obtaining orders of protection, commencing divorce proceedings, and securing definitive child support orders and custody arrangements.

The firm is a founding member of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance, and our lawyers are active in the organization's committee leadership. Fried Frank contributed the introductory chapter for an LFAA report on the history of race discrimination in our immigration laws.

Throughout 2023, Fried Frank strategically partnered with 18 legal services organizations, engaging in diverse pro bono initiatives such as transgender name change clinics, criminal record expungement clinics, and obtaining temporary and permanent civil protective orders. Notably, we obtained a rare 10-year extension of a protective order for a DC resident and her daughter.



*Karen Grisez,  
Pro Bono Counsel*



*Laura Israel Sinrod,  
Pro Bono Counsel*

**"Fried Frank's commitment to advancing civil and human rights through pro bono work is unwavering. Through strategic partnerships and dedicated advocacy, we leverage our resources and experience to provide access to justice to low-income and vulnerable individuals, families and marginalized communities."** — Laura Israel Sinrod,

#### Pro Bono Counsel

We also joined temporary protected status clinics for vulnerable populations including Afghans, Ukrainians, and Venezuelans, recognizing that obtaining safety and the right to work are global human rights.

Through our partnership with the Legal Aid Society of New York, we assist their immigration clients in applications for naturalization and DACA renewal and advise Immigration Hotline callers seeking counsel on individual immigration issues. Each month, attorneys across all practice groups participate in Saturday naturalization clinics in partnership with CUNY Citizenship Now! and Access Justice Brooklyn. Attorneys in our DC office also participate in similar clinics for Mi Familia Vota, Hogar Hispano, and the DC Bar Pro Bono Program.



# GIBSON DUNN

**A**t Gibson Dunn, protecting the civil and human rights of the most vulnerable members of our communities is a cornerstone of our pro bono practice, underpinning the vast majority of the 550+ new pro bono matters we opened in 2023.

Humanitarian forms of immigration relief are at the forefront of our pro bono practice. In 2023, we helped hundreds of Afghans facing persecution by the Taliban seek refuge in the United States. For example, we applied for humanitarian parole on behalf of 300+ Afghans who were at imminent risk of Taliban reprisals, including dozens of individuals affiliated with an Afghan national women's sports team. These young women and their families faced harassment and even death threats— all because they dared to excel in sports and express their belief in women's equality. After months of advocacy, and despite nearly all parole applications nationwide languishing with USCIS for years, we started receiving approvals and have now begun to welcome members of the team to the US!

We also worked closely with clients after their arrival in the US, helping dozens of Afghans — including unaccompanied children who were separated from their families and evacuated alone, young women who served in an all-women unit of the Afghan army, and many others—obtain asylum (with many more application pending). We regularly represent asylum-seekers, survivors of domestic violence, victims of crime, and other marginalized immigrants in their immigration proceedings. In 2023, we secured asylum for a Salvadoran woman who faced targeted gang violence due to her family's outspoken opposition to the gang, was assaulted by a gang leader, and ultimately fled. We also obtained significant victories for political dissidents from Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela seeking asylum, as well as a Chinese asylum-seeker who was persecuted for her Christian beliefs. And we represented dozens of LGBTQ+ individuals who fled persecution because of their sexual orientation.

These are just a sampling of our immigration cases on behalf of clients who were denied their civil and human rights.

Impact litigation defending civil and human rights is another focus of our practice. We represent peaceful protesters subjected to police violence and bring § 1983 claims for clients mistreated while in prison. We challenge bans on abortion and seek to compel the government to sufficiently regulate “ghost guns.” Our commitment to advancing civil and human rights through impact litigation is exemplified by two of our highest-profile pro bono matters of 2023. We represent the Fearless Foundation, a non-profit organization designed to combat and draw attention to generations of economic discrimination by providing Black women business-owners with charitable grants and mentorship. The Foundation's grant program was challenged by the same people behind the Supreme Court's decision striking down affirmative action in college admissions, seeking a preliminary injunction forcing the Foundation to direct its grants and mentorship on a race-neutral basis, effacing the Foundation's First Amendment protected speech. We succeeded in defeating the preliminary injunction and now represent the Foundation on appeal in the Eleventh Circuit.

We also represented Deon Jones, a young man who was peacefully protesting on Los Angeles when he was shot in the face with a rubber bullet by a police officer. We brought suit against that officer and the Los Angeles Police Department on Mr. Jones' behalf, asserting violations of his constitutional rights. In 2023, we won a historic jury trial for Mr. Jones. The City of Los Angeles ultimately settled the suit for \$860,000.

We also recognize that our criminal justice system has a large, negative impact on vulnerable populations' civil and human rights. We work to address that pressing problem through pro bono work, too. We work closely with the Innocence Project to screen cases in which individuals have maintained their innocence post-conviction, to identify cases in which actual innocence challenges can be brought. And we work with convicted individuals to help them seek parole, resentencing for more just terms of imprisonment, and, where appropriate, exoneration. By example, in 2023, the Firm helped secure the release of an individual who had been incarcerated in Louisiana for years after an unconstitutional conviction.

 **HansonBridgett**

**H**anson Bridgett's pro bono program focused heavily on Civil and Human Rights in 2023, devoting nearly a third of its pro bono hours to these causes. The firm handled matters ranging from limited scope clinics to impact litigation to protect and enforce our client's Human and Civil Rights — these included, among many others: successfully challenging a client's unconstitutional detention in a privately-run ICE facility; assisting more than a dozen Afghan refugees; and affirming California residents' rights to public coastal access.

In one example of our work, Hanson Bridgett represented a client who had been held in ICE detention for nearly two years without a bond hearing. The client is a legal permanent resident who immigrated to the US with his parents when he was only six months old. When he was still a teenager, he became addicted to methamphetamines, which resulted in several run-ins with the law over the next 10 years of his life. After meeting his wife in 2017, the client was able to get completely sober, and they started a family together. After turning his life around, the client turned himself in to serve a 45-day sentence for an old drug charge, and was set to be released in November 2021.

A few days before his scheduled release, the client was taken into custody by ICE and

transferred to the Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield, California, where he remained held without a bond hearing for the entirety of his detention. Hanson Bridgett's pro bono attorneys filed a petition for writ of habeas corpus on the client's behalf in the Northern District of California. The court granted our client's petition in part and ordered that the government provide him with a bond hearing before an immigration judge. At the bond hearing, the immigration court granted our client minimum allowable bond, allowing him to be released from ICE detention and to return home within a few days after this hearing.

In 2023, Hanson Bridgett also partnered with a Sacramento-based non-profit to host three immigration clinics to help Afghan refugees apply to USCIS for different forms of immigration relief including temporary protective status, asylum, and legal permanent resident status. The clinics were set up in response to the 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, which led many refugees to flee Afghanistan to nearby countries, ultimately making their way to the United States as refugees. Sacramento has one of the highest populations of Afghan refugees in the entire country, and these clinics served an essential function for these families' ability to secure lawful immigration status to avoid deportation. The clinics also resulted in Hanson Bridgett attorneys taking on full-scope representation for some of the clinic clients' asylum claims.



**“Hanson Bridgett is incredibly proud to be honored again with the NLADA Beacon of Justice Award. We are also proud of our attorneys and professionals who dedicate their time and expertise to work on important civil and human rights matters, and our clients who risk their personal safety and liberty to seek justice for themselves and others.”**

**— Samir Abdelnour, Director of Pro Bono and Social Impact**

# HUNTON ANDREWS KURTH

Since 2021, the firm has been in partnership with Human Rights First's Project Afghan Legal Assistance to help those who fled the Taliban takeover with immigration relief. In 2023, the firm dedicated over 1,300 pro bono hours to support this project, including 21 direct representation matters as well as green card and work permit clinics. So far, ten families have been granted asylum and the teams continue to help the asylees obtain their green cards and assist with reunification efforts.

Assisting HRF, the firm's Boston office represented an Afghan client who is Hazara, an ethnic minority in Afghanistan. The client, who lived in fear of the Taliban due to their Christian identity and as a former employee of the Afghan government, was granted asylum in September 2023. The team then worked to bring over the client's wife and children, who had been hiding in Pakistan since summer 2022. In December 2023, the team learned that the family's applications for visas were approved and his wife and children arrived in the U.S just two days before Christmas.

Outside of this partnership, the firm is assisting with federal litigation accusing a US Marine of abducting an Afghan baby. The child was orphaned by a joint US/Afghan military operation in Afghanistan and taken to a US airbase for medical treatment. The US government agreed that she was an Afghan citizen and should be reunited with her Afghan family members (who the firm is representing). Nonetheless, the Marine surreptitiously obtained custody and adoption orders from a Virginia court. When the child traveled to the United States with the firm's clients, who had cared for her for 18 months in Afghanistan and viewed her as their daughter, the Marine

**“As you can imagine this was an emotional and challenging yet meaningful case to work on. And I think it is emblematic of the kind of impact that groups like NLADA, Legal Aid and defense attorneys can have on marginalized clients. I want to thank groups like NLADA for continuing to support this incredibly important work.”**

— Reiko Koyama, Counsel

asserted custody of the child on the basis of the surreptitiously-obtained adoption order.

As one of our key projects, firm lawyers also assist those who were wrongfully convicted or sentenced. The firm co-counseled with the ACLU of Maryland to represent a 62-year-old Black man who served nearly 40 years in prison despite substantial errors in the prosecution and being previously recommended for release by the Maryland Parole Commission. Flaws and racial biases affecting the client's conviction trial in 1985 included reliance on highly suggestive, cross-racial eyewitness testimony and failure to investigate the client's co-defendant. Part of the team's goal was to detail the unreliability of these eyewitness identifications and challenge the effectiveness of trial counsel. At a November hearing, the firm argued for his release, and the Circuit Court granted him time served. The client was released the same day and reunited with his family just before the holidays.

# HUSCH BLACKWELL

In response to the large number of Afghan asylum seekers in the Kansas City area following the Taliban's return to power, and the challenges of the immigration process, Husch Blackwell Partner Kelli Meilink and then-Senior Associate (now Partner) Jenna Brofsky, both located in Kansas City, presented the idea for a large-scale pro bono program to assist numerous Afghan refugees facing the one-year deadline to file for affirmative asylum in the U.S. Both Kelli and Jenna have immense workloads, yet they managed to find the time to organize and lead this project. They coordinated this project by working closely with the Jewish Vocational Service of Kansas City to identify clients, train and mentor HB attorneys and summer associates, and review the applications before filing them with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Forty-nine HB team members participated in this project, including fifteen associates, two partners, three paralegals and twenty-nine summer associates. Through this project, we were able to help 52 Afghan refugees navigate the difficult and complex legal process for asylum. This area of law is constantly evolving, making it difficult to analyze and review applications. Because of Kelli and Jenna's leadership, over 50 Afghan refugees now have a chance to be granted asylum. Without legal help, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for this to happen.

Husch Blackwell Pro Bono Counsel Brent Dulle leads court-appointed federal civil rights cases on behalf of the firm. Recently, a pro bono team helped a Missouri prisoner vindicate his constitutional right to



L-R: Partners Kelli Meilink and Jenna Brofsky; Pro Bono Counsel Brent Dulle, Senior Counsel Laura Robinson

be protected from attack by another inmate. While jailed by the Missouri Department of Corrections, Christopher Spates was viciously attacked in his cell by another inmate. At the time, Christopher's hands were cuffed behind his back, preventing him from defending himself. The altercation was no surprise: Christopher and his attacker had fought earlier the same day, but correctional officers disregarded that information and put the two in a cell together anyway, with Christopher cuffed and the other man unrestrained. Christopher initially brought his civil lawsuit pro se (without legal counsel) in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri; later, the court granted Christopher's request for counsel and appointed then Husch Blackwell attorney Ginger Gooch to represent him pro bono. When Ginger left the firm to become an appellate court judge, Laura Robinson, Brent Dulle, and Abi Goodrich took over Christopher's case.

The Husch Blackwell team tried the case to a jury in Springfield, Missouri, arguing that the correctional officers violated Christopher's Eighth Amendment guarantee to be protected from attack by other inmates. The jury agreed, returning a verdict for compensatory damages of \$85,000 and punitive damages totaling \$140,000 in Christopher's favor. An appeal remains pending at the 8th Circuit. Juveniles With Life Without Parole The firm continues to partner with the MacArthur Justice Center to represent individuals convicted as juveniles with sentences of life without the possibility of parole in cases seeking parole. This is a project that has spanned several years.

**“Husch Blackwell is uncommon for good reason, putting people - our clients, communities, and colleagues, at the heart of what we do. Lifting the less fortunate and bridging gaps in our communities through pro bono legal service is a cornerstone of our firm, and we are honored to be recognized as a Beacon of Justice this year.”**

— Margaret Richards, Director of Pro Bono Services

# JacksonLewis

Jackson Lewis is deeply committed to providing pro bono work representation to vulnerable communities across the globe. In 2023, nearly 400 of our attorneys recorded 6,313 collective hours of pro bono work. As part of the firmwide Pro Bono initiative, Jackson Lewis has assisted clients with matters in the following areas: domestic violence and abuse, education, housing insecurity, military and veterans' affairs, religious freedoms, discrimination, criminal law, advice and counsel to nonprofits, racial justice, and prisoners' rights.

An important facet of the firm's pro bono work is our dedication to civil and human rights, underscored by Jackson Lewis attorneys' years-long track records of assisting refugees with asylum and green card applications. In 2023 alone, several Jackson Lewis attorneys assisted refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Kenya, Guatemala and Ukraine. Many of these individuals could not return to their homes because of legitimate threats of violence against them and their families. Jackson Lewis attorneys provided them with crucial legal support in a time of dire need.

For example, Marissa Prianti, an Associate in the firm's White Plains, New York office, represented a Guatemalan man, who had no status in the United States. The client is the father of an eight-year-old U.S. citizen who suffers from significant speech and language delays that require ongoing speech therapy and special education services. The client was facing removal to Guatemala — such a compulsory departure would disrupt his child's access to services that would prepare her to eventually live independently. In February 2024, Marissa successfully demonstrated to the New York City Immigration Court that the child would suffer extreme and unusual hardship if forced to return to Guatemala with her father. On behalf of the Guatemalan man, she secured a Cancellation of Removal for a Non-Permanent Resident — technically known as EOIR-42B relief. The child's father is currently on a waitlist for a green card, and, in the meantime, he can continue living and working in the U.S. Without Marissa's assistance,

there would be no guarantee of a stable future for the child.

In furtherance of our support of refugees seeking safe harbor, Carolina Guiral, an Associate in the firm's Washington, D.C. office, handled the asylum application of a 13-year-old Afghan minor. The client was forced to travel to the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor after the Taliban took control over Kabul. The Taliban had threatened the child's family for months because of his mother's work as doctor educating women in midwifery, as well as her collaboration with foreign organizations supporting women's rights. The child was separated from his family during their efforts to flee Afghanistan and as a result, was placed in an immigration shelter for several months after entering the U.S.

Carolina prepared the client's asylum application and represented him at his interview. The client has since been granted asylum status, and subsequently reunited with his parents and siblings in the U.S.

Meredith Stewart, a Principal in our Boston office, also assisted an Afghan refugee in 2023. She prepared an asylum filing for a woman in her early 20s who escaped from Afghanistan on her own accord in 2021. Her mother, who has now passed, was a judge in Afghanistan, and the client herself was a university student and a passionate activist. While in Kabul, she was forced to abandon her education, but she continued to speak out regularly on the rights of women. After the fall of Afghanistan in August 2021, she was a target of the Taliban. Knowing she had to leave the country as soon as possible to protect her life and safety, she secured the backing of an American supporter and safely arrived in the United States. With Meredith's assistance, the client's asylum application was granted in September 2023. Since arriving in the U.S., she has continued her higher-level education, studying criminal justice with the aspiration of become a human rights lawyer. This individual, and all the refugees Jackson Lewis assisted in 2023, are a testament to the resilience and determination of humans in dire scenarios.

Jackson Lewis is honored to be a supportive force in their journeys, and we will continue our commitment to pro bono work so more stories like the ones described above can be heard far and wide.

# JENNER & BLOCK

Jenner & Block has a long and proud history of protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ communities. From winning the landmark case *Lawrence v. Texas* more than 20 years ago to our ongoing pro bono matters, we fight for the equality and constitutional rights of all. Our advocacy took many forms in 2023, with high impact cases across the country. Recognizing that there is still a significant amount of work that must be done, our lawyers continue to lead the way advocating for those in need of access to justice.

Our work involving challenges to various state laws in 2023 included some of the most egregious attacks on transgender and LGBTQ+ children and families. In May 2023, we filed a lawsuit in Oklahoma challenging SB 613, a law that bans necessary and often lifesaving gender-affirming medical care to transgender adolescents and threatens providers who violate the law with a felony conviction and discipline from their licensing boards. The lawsuit was filed in partnership with the ACLU, the ACLU of Oklahoma, and Lambda Legal on behalf of transgender adolescents in Oklahoma and a medical provider specializing in adolescent medicine who is advocating on behalf of her patients. We are appealing the district court's denial of a temporary stay of the law. We also filed suit in Iowa to challenge SF 496, a wide-ranging law that targets LGBTQ+ students and content for erasure in schools. Under that law, books for grades K-12 that contain descriptions of a sex act, with the exception of the Bible and other religious texts, would be removed. The "Don't Say LGBTQ" provision forbids programs, "promotion," curriculum, instruction, and more relating to gender identity or sexual orientation in grades K-6. Days before Iowa's ban on books and "Don't Say LGBTQ" provisions were set to be enforced on January 1, 2024, a federal district court temporarily blocked those two parts of the law.

On November 1, 2023, we filed a petition for writ of certiorari urging the US Supreme Court to overturn a decision by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals upholding Kentucky's ban on medically necessary care for transgender youth. Senate Bill 150 bans families from following the advice of medical professionals and practices approved by all major medical associations. The law also forces transgender youth who have been receiving care to stop following their prescribed treatment plan. Our



*Clockwise: Jenner & Block Partners Laurie Edelstein, Howard Suskin, Gail Morse, and Rémi Jaffré*

**“Jenner & Block is honored to be the recipient of the Beacon of Justice Award in recognition of our efforts to challenge attacks upon the LGBTQ community in 2023. We are proud to represent pro bono clients, from individuals to organizations, who are advocating for their rights and justice.” — Gail Morse, Partner and Co-Chair of the LGBTQ Forum**

case and a similar one in Tennessee over the state's ban on essential healthcare for transgender youth, are the first to challenge transgender healthcare restrictions before the Supreme Court. The writ is still pending.

We also represented the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians, the National Association of Nurses, and others as amici in cases across the country in support of transgender rights. Our amicus briefs have addressed the impairment to physical and mental health suffered by transgender individuals when they are deprived of basic rights and have been filed in a wide range of contexts.



Civil rights and human rights are a core focus of King & Spalding's pro bono program. Our pro bono work in the this arena takes many different forms, including humanitarian immigration work for clients from Afghanistan and around the world, section 1983 cases on behalf of incarcerated people who have been mistreated or have not received adequate medical care, habeas motions and appeals, compassionate release and clemency motions, screening innocence claims, re-sentencing for juveniles sentenced to life without parole, assisting veterans with accessing benefits and discharge upgrades, criminal record clearing, access to appropriate medical care and gender-affirming name changes for LGBTQ+ clients, access to appropriate educational support, representing vulnerable students in school disciplinary hearings, access to public benefits, housing conditions cases and eviction defense, protecting First Amendment rights, assisting survivors of trafficking and domestic violence, supporting entrepreneurs and inventors from underrepresented communities, seeking the release of political prisoners abroad, preparing toolkits for human rights defenders around the world, and supporting nonprofit organizations who defend civil rights and human rights every day.

We believe each of these areas of pro bono work to advance civil rights and/or human rights by helping our

clients and other people in our communities and around the world to overcome the discrimination, injustices, and inequities that they have faced. Our civil rights and human rights work can take the form of impact litigation where we seek to represent a class of people and correct an injustice that has been done to all of them. We worked with several partners to file a class action lawsuit on behalf of Mountain View, California residents who live in recreational vehicles, challenging a citywide ban on parking recreational and oversized vehicles in most of the city. The ban would have displaced many long-time residents of Mountain View who can no longer afford permanent housing there but still have strong ties to the area, including jobs and children in the local schools. The ban put our clients at risk of homelessness. We reached a favorable settlement in February 2023. Under the terms of the agreement, the City agreed to provide at least three miles of available street parking for oversized vehicles, a detailed map showing where oversized vehicles may park, and at least one citation and 72-hours' notice before towing vehicles that are parked where they should not be. We are happy to be part of keeping these residents of Mountain View in their homes and in this community.

Much of our civil rights and human rights work can also take the form of individual client representations. For example, we represented a Vietnamese American victim of a hate crime, whose rights as a victim were ignored by the prosecution prior to our involvement. We not only appeared in court on his behalf to vindicate his rights, but we also engaged in further advocacy with the prosecutor's office to ensure changes were made to their system so that future victims' rights will be fully respected.



L-R: Radha Sathe Manthe, Pro Bono Deputy; Joshua C. Toll, Pro Bono Partner

**“Our pro bono program has a long-standing commitment to civil rights and human rights, and it’s an honor to be able to assist some of the most vulnerable members of our communities with legal issues they are facing. We are proud to**

**be recognized for this work again and look forward to continuing this important work.”** — Joshua C. Toll, Pro Bono Partner

## KIRKLAND & ELLIS

In 2023, Kirkland continued its significant pro bono immigration work, including our efforts to ensure as many of our Afghan allies as possible can begin a new life in North America. In the more than two years since the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, Kirkland attorneys have worked on 70+ Afghan asylum or adjustment-of-status cases. This includes one of the largest asylum adjudication class action settlements in U.S. history, which has resulted in helping thousands of asylum-seekers find a legal path to residency.

In April 2023, Kirkland and the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) filed a pro bono case challenging the systematic failure of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to adjudicate the asylum applications of tens of thousands of asylum applicants within the 150-day deadline set by Congress. On September 11, 2023, the Kirkland and NIJC team reached a historic settlement with the U.S. government that established a timeline for making asylum application decisions for the approximately 20,000 Afghans who were still in limbo. By the end of 2023, the U.S. government had successfully adjudicated 65% of their asylum applications, meeting one of the requirements established by the settlement. The settlement provides additional deadlines for 2024 and protections for Afghan asylum-seekers through October 2025.

Meanwhile, Kirkland attorneys continued to help former students and alumnae of the Asian University for Women (AUW) apply for asylum and find a legal path to U.S. residency. Kirkland first joined a cohort of other law firms partnering with the Tahirih Justice Center to represent women at the AUW, an institution that seeks to educate and empower women leaders in Asia through a liberal arts and sciences education. By the end of 2023, Kirkland attorneys had helped six of the 10 women it's representing to successfully receive asylum, work that involved screening them for eligibility using an interpreter, filling out their paperwork, preparing them for their interviews and hearings, and attending hearings with them. In total, the efforts of AUW, Kirkland and other law firms have succeeded in helping approximately 150 AUW students and alumnae evacuate to the U.S. and continue their studies.

“There are few opportunities you actually have to immediately and materially change someone’s life for the better,” said Kirkland partner Nicole Washington, who serves on AUW’s New York Board of Directors. “I’m lucky to have some training and skills that could be put to use for an initiative like this.” While the Kirkland team put its full force behind Afghan asylum efforts, our other pro bono immigration work didn’t stop. Throughout 2023, Kirkland teams served the immigration needs of more than 330 clients, whose countries of origin include Chad, Nigeria, Venezuela, Pakistan, Jamaica and many others. Each of these success stories has made a monumental impact on the lives of individuals who’ve experienced enormous challenges and acute danger in their home countries and has given hope to those still looking for a new start in the U.S.



Asylum interview.

**“U.S. asylum law is complex, and asylum matters require attention to detail and a lot of patience. Kirkland’s pro bono team is so proud to be able to assist asylum seekers through this difficult process, not only providing them with the legal assistance they need, but also ensuring they have someone on their side as they pursue a brighter future.”**

— Ashley Huebner, Pro Bono Counsel

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KIRKLAND & ELLIS

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PAUL  
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ReedSmith  
Driving progress  
through partnership

SHOOK  
HARDY & BACON

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## LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

Latham & Watkins has developed one of the world's most innovative pro bono programs, with 99% of our US lawyers participating in pro bono in 2023 (96% worldwide). In 2023, our lawyers worked on more than 3,100 pro bono matters, donating thousands of hours of free legal services in the areas of civil rights and human rights. Pro bono is fundamental to our firm's culture.

Our immigration practice has long been a cornerstone of the firm's pro bono program. Through this practice, our lawyers and professional staff around the globe have been able to foster human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and assist vulnerable individuals around the globe, including asylees and refugees. This work took on a new urgency following the withdrawal of the US and its allies from Afghanistan in 2021. We developed a holistic, coordinated response to the ensuing crisis by leveraging our immigration practice and building on the firm's deep relationships with legal services partner organizations, including Human Rights First, Casa Cornelia Law Center, PAIR Project (Political Asylum/Immigration Representation), and Catholic Charities.

This comprehensive, holistic response continued during the summer of 2023, when we coordinated a firm-wide effort to help evacuated Afghan nationals in the US complete and submit their re-parole applications. After the Taliban gained control and thousands of Afghans were evacuated, the

US government gave many Afghans temporary permission to live and work in the US for two years. That two-year period began expiring over the summer, so these clients needed assistance to file for a renewal (known as "re-parole") to remain legally in the US. Summer associates and lawyers across nearly all US offices participated in legal clinics with Human Rights First to help these clients pursue their cases in the US.

In 2023, we also developed a new partnership with Mina's List, an organization that seeks to advance women's political leadership and civic engagement globally. Through this partnership, Latham is reviewing and assessing applications for female former members of Afghanistan's parliament, government employees, and activists who hope to resettle in the US through the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). To date, our lawyers have reviewed the cases of more than 100 women.

Besides helping victims of the Afghan crisis, we advise asylum seekers fleeing persecution and violence in other parts of the world. For many years, we have collaborated with Justice Centre Hong Kong (JCHK), a nonprofit and human rights organization working to protect the rights of forced migrants, refugees, and survivors of torture, human trafficking, and forced labor. Our Asia and Middle East offices assisted JCHK on researching refugee labor and work rights, refugee family reunification policies, and climate-induced displacement in the Asia Pacific region, among other matters in 2023.



**"We are honored and grateful for this recognition, as Latham's pro bono program forms a cornerstone of our firm's culture and exemplifies our firm's values. Through our immigration practice, Latham colleagues around the globe have been able to foster human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and assist vulnerable individuals, including asylees and refugees. Congratulations to all the other awardees!"** — Laura Atkinson-Hope, Public Service Counsel, Director of Global Pro Bono

 **Lowenstein  
Sandler**

In 2023, Lowenstein spent significant time protecting and advocating for the rights of LGBTQ+ people, who experience high rates of discrimination, poverty, and violence. The firm addresses systemic issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community and represents individuals who experience discrimination based on their gender identity or sexual orientation or who seek legal name changes to match their identities.

The firm is currently working with leading LGBTQ+ organizations in challenging Florida's ban on gender-affirming health care for transgender youth and restrictions on such care for adults. Lowenstein and its co-counsel argued that the ban and restrictions were grounded in intentional discrimination against transgender people. During the federal trial in December 2023, the legal team put on testimony from practitioners in psychiatry, endocrinology, medical ethics, and pediatric medicine, all of whom shared decades of clinical evidence proving the safety of gender-affirming health care and the mental and physical harms that can result when care is denied. Plaintiff parents also described how being able to obtain doctor-recommended care has improved their children's lives and allowed them to be healthy, happy kids, and detailed the intense suffering their children experienced when they learned that such care might be cut off. An adult plaintiff testified that he has been unable to access necessary care for himself anywhere in Florida since the restrictions took effect. A decision in the case is imminent, and we are hopeful that the court will rule that Florida may not ban or unreasonably restrict gender-affirming medical care.

Lowenstein also advocated for the LGBTQ+ community by conducting legal research and submitting an amicus brief for the ACLU-NJ and Garden State Equality after several school districts in New Jersey required their staff to notify parents if their children asked to be called by a different name or pronouns at school, to use a different restroom, or to join a different sex-segregated team or club. The notification policies applied even if the student did not want their parents to have that information. In an effort to protect the privacy and safety of LGBTQ+ youth who express their gender identities in school but not at home, our brief argues that the constitutional right of parents

to raise their children as they see fit does not extend to enlisting the help of public schools to notify them of their children's gender identity as expressed in school over their children's objections. The brief also argues that applying the parental notification policy only to gender-nonconforming students raises serious equal protection problems under the New Jersey Constitution. The New Jersey Appellate Division will hear the appeals in the coming months. Individual Representation

The firm represents an inmate who suffered repeated verbal threats to his safety and sexual harassment at the hands of other incarcerated individuals. Though our client notified prison officials that he was the target of harassment because of his sexual orientation and that his cellmate made daily threats of physical and sexual violence against him, the prison made no effort to move or protect him. In fact, the guards behaved in ways that encouraged the harassment. After our client was raped by his cellmate, the Federal District Court for the District of New Jersey appointed Lowenstein as counsel. We are working to secure justice for our client through both a monetary settlement and behavior changes among prison officials to fulfill their obligation to protect inmates who are being harassed.

The firm's partnership with Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund to file name-change petitions for low-income transgender individuals continued to be among our most popular pro bono programs in 2023. Transgender individuals whose appearances do not match the name or gender on their identity documents often experience unwelcome scrutiny that deters them from applying for jobs, housing, and public benefits. Lawyers and professional staff across diverse practice groups spent more than 800 hours representing more than 50 transgender individuals seeking legal name changes in 2023.

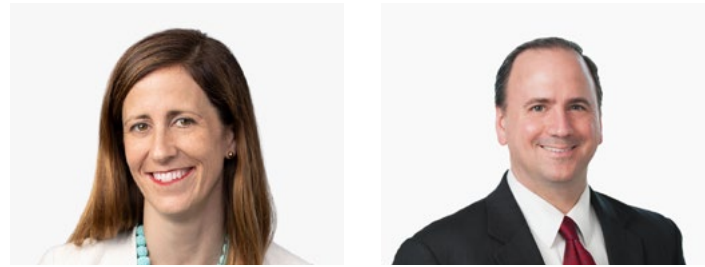
In addition to our focus on advocating for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, Lowenstein worked on many additional matters that advanced civil and human rights, both in New Jersey and more broadly. Some examples include: Advocating to ensure that anyone in need of interpreters in administrative courts has access to language services, representing Black Lives Matters activists who were wrongfully arrested while protesting for police accountability, and advancing reproductive justice by providing legal advice to organizations in New Jersey and New York that support reproductive health care.



The events of recent years have underscored the hard truth that inequity doesn't occur in a vacuum. All too often, it's the result of historical and systemic discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and more. In the face of such deeply embedded systems, McDermott acknowledged the power of incorporating "justice" as a core tenant of its diversity, equity and inclusion program to launch "JDEI". Our efforts have yielded impactful results for our pro bono clients with recent examples highlighted below.

Working in partnership with the Yale Supreme Court Clinic, McDermott secured a unanimous reversal from the Supreme Court of the United States for a transgender immigrant seeking relief from deportation, and ultimately eased the procedural burdens for immigrants trying to navigate complex bureaucracy without counsel. For decades, courts relied on old case law to hold that the Immigration and Nationality Act's exhaustion requirement was jurisdictional —and that immigrants often had to raise issues via a discretionary motion to reconsider in order to preserve. Advancing wholly novel arguments, McDermott convinced the Court to set aside scores of adverse law from the lower courts. Now, immigrants can far more easily achieve judicial review of their full range of claims following an adverse administrative decision.

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) charged low-income public housing residents a minimum rent, even when they faced hardships and were eligible for exemptions. Legal Action Chicago (LAC) and the National Housing Law Project (NHLP) teamed up with McDermott to file a class action complaint against CHA. The complaint alleged that CHA failed to inform families of their right to request a hardship exemption. The team negotiated a settlement with CHA, which included stopping rent charges for eligible residents, erasing past rent balances, and clarifying the exemption policy. The settlement benefits Chicago's most vulnerable residents and



L-R: Elizabeth Lewis, Pro Bono & Community Service Partner; Paul Thompson, Pro Bono Litigation Partner

**"We emphasize three key global initiatives: providing legal services to displaced persons around the world; fighting wrongful convictions; and supporting nonprofits, small businesses and entrepreneurs from traditionally marginalized communities. Acknowledging the Firm's commitment to equality and justice, this award further inspires us to strengthen our collaboration with pro bono partner organizations."**

**— Elizabeth Lewis, Pro Bono & Community Service Partner**

serves as a guide for other cities facing similar issues.

McDermott secured a settlement agreement with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) that requires the state to provide immigrant foster children with vital immigration support services. As a result, children who may be eligible to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) – a type of immigration relief that confers critical benefits to young people – will have the support they need to obtain this important relief.



In 2023, Mintz collaborated with several partners, including Lawyers for Civil Rights and Greater Boston Legal services, in a successful First Circuit appeal of a District Court decision upholding the admissions policy designed by the Boston Public Schools during COVID. The admissions criteria that were the subject of this lawsuit were designed thoughtfully and intentionally to respond to this crisis in a way that is fair to all students, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds. Our advocacy helped to ensure that every student in Boston, despite the pandemic, had the chance to attend some of the most selective schools in our city.

The firm also continued to work with the Lawyers Clearinghouse and the City of Boston to run a virtual Criminal Record Sealing Clinic that connects low-income clients, a majority of whom are BIPOC, with volunteer attorneys and staff members to seal or expunge their criminal records when possible. Criminal records reports are used by employers and landlords to deny people employment, housing, and educational opportunities. The CORI Clinic helps dozens of individuals seal their criminal records every year at clinics throughout the year.

For 30 years, Mintz has assisted thousands of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Since 1989, Mintz has represented

thousands of individual survivors at the trial and appellate courts, successfully lobbied for legislative reforms, and represented dozens of nonprofits assisting survivors annually. This year, Mintz successfully advocated for a victim's privacy rights – involving the victim's privileged therapy treatment records – in criminal cases in a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court case. The resulting decision established important precedent about the privacy of treatment records and victims' rights in criminal prosecutions. Mintz attorneys also successfully vacated the convictions of a sex trafficking survivor, marking the first application of Massachusetts Vacatur Statute, a law that Mintz helped to pass.

This past year, Mintz helped The League of Women for Community Service (LWCS), one of the longest continuously running Black women's organizations in America, in matters related to renovations of its historic Boston headquarters enabling it to continue serving as a forum for informing the public about pertinent issues that affect the social, economic and general well-being of the Black community.

Our Toronto office helped form the National GC Network, Canada's largest organization of general counsels from diverse backgrounds committed to advancing DEI in the legal market. Mintz guided the National GC Network through the legal work needed to set up as a nonprofit, and helped to raise funds to hire its first director. Today, the National GC Network comprises more than 120 GCs, hosts an annual conference, and has rolled out an internship program for students looking to enter law. The National GC Network strives to provide lawyers, regardless of race or ethnicity, equal opportunity to advance their careers and to work in a diverse and inclusive environment.



**"Over the past thirty years, Mintz has fought to help and protect vulnerable individuals, families, and communities in their civil and human rights. We are honored to be recognized by the NLADA for our dedication to pro bono work and look forward to continuing to bring our services to those in need."**

**— Susan M. Finegan, Member & Chair, Pro Bono Committee**



In 2023, the firm provided pro bono legal services on cases involving human rights litigation, research projects focused on civil and human rights, and transactional initiatives to advance equity for under-represented individuals. As a part of this work, the firm provided pro bono legal service in the following matters:

The firm assisted in a class action lawsuit by several public interest groups, including the ARC of Georgia and GAO, against the Georgia Department of Education's program that segregates students with mental disabilities. Case is a civil action in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia (Atlanta).

In 2023, the firm conducted legal research regarding Minnesota law on legal protections for LGBTQ+ and/or HIV-positive individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV status in long-term care settings including nursing homes, assisted-living residences, and other residential health care facilities.

In an appellate action in Denver, we filed amicus briefs to challenge the discriminatory use of preemptory challenges to improperly strike jurors.

The firm handled representation of an individual who was misidentified on discriminatory grounds by facial recognition technology being used by Minnesota law enforcement agencies.

As we grieve the horrific loss of one of our employees to domestic violence, we defend survivors in projects led across our offices and launched a new partnership with the Hive in South Carolina to protect survivors of domestic violence.

Some of the firm's critical impact work included high profile lawsuits and class actions seeking reform, including representing Black Lives Matter protesters v. New Orleans Police Dept, addressing a youth detention center in Charleston, South Carolina that was found unsuitable for use, four Hague international abduction cases to reunite children with foreign based parents, and partnering with the MacArthur

**“We are thrilled to receive the Beacon of Justice Award from the National Legal Aids & Defender Association, recognizing Nelson Mullins’ efforts to advance human and civil rights. This award underscores our dedication to fighting for justice and equality and reinforces our mission to amplify the voices of marginalized groups and champion fairness in every community.”**

**— Elisa Kodish, Pro Bono Partner**

Justice Center to represent a prisoner in a solitary confinement case v. the Florida Dept. of Corrections. The firm handled complex custody cases involving adverse grandparents in Baltimore and representation of an indigenous mother in Minnesota.

The following transactional initiatives were aimed at helping to create equity in our communities through our pro bono initiatives: Collaborating with Georgetown Law Center's Coalition for Racial Equity and Democratic Economy, the firm worked on funding strategies and a \$1 billion bond issuance generating \$150 million to be used to in food deserts within the Washington, D.C. Metro Area. This was aimed at helping move toward the modernization of minority depository institutions by augmenting their IT capabilities. The firm provided advice for structuring social impact investment vehicles for Nashville Assisted African Alliance to give low-interest loans to minority-led CDFIs.

The firm also worked to support businesses facing legal action based on new legislation expected to result in businesses being denied permits for pride demonstrations in various suburban and rural communities.

We are part of a Legal Defense Fund to represent businesses in seeking injunctive relief and championing 1st and 14th Amendment arguments in response to forthcoming permit denials.



**A**t Nixon Peabody, we believe the private bar plays a crucial role in preserving justice and equality for all. We embrace our obligation to advocate for those in need and fight for a future free of discrimination and bias. We protect civil rights for aging adults while paving a more equitable path forward for our youth. And we work across borders to support marginalized groups everywhere. While the impacts of injustice are varied, the solutions are remarkably similar: to create durable systems that revolve not around social differences but our shared humanity.

One pro bono matter that embodies our commitment to human rights is our work with the Bay Area Host Committee (BAHC), a nonprofit organization that uses the power of sports to drive economic vitality, community engagement, civic pride, and global recognition. BAHC will host a slate of high-profile sports competitions in the San Francisco Bay Area that create important opportunities for social betterment.

But BAHC's ability to catalyze positive cultural change hinges on thoughtful, inclusive preparation. Starting in 2023, NP began serving as BAHC's exclusive outside counsel, helping the organization with pre-planning work that includes, most notably, human

rights advocacy. Led by our Pro Bono Partner Matt Richards, the NP-BAHC team is developing a human rights action plan for the Bay Area in conjunction with the 2026 World Cup. We're working to promote and protect the rights of Bay Area residents and workers in FIFA's workforce, including inclusion for all, accessibility for persons with disabilities, and safeguards for the welfare and well-being of unsheltered populations.

Through this work, we're leveraging sports to level the playing field for our vulnerable community members by reinforcing labor and human rights. This initiative will set a precedent for labor and other human rights protections and serve as a baseline against which other global sporting events can be measured.

NP's partnership with BAHC stemmed in part from our track record in the global human rights space. Our pro bono program has long represented immigrants and asylum seekers, populations too often subject to civil rights violations. In response to global instability, we've provided immediate support to those displaced and in danger of persecution in their home countries.

Following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, we helped evacuate hundreds of Afghan refugees and represented many in seeking asylum or other humanitarian immigration relief. These cases have unfolded over several years, and in 2023, many came to a successful resolution. We secured asylum in the United States for dozens of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees.



**“We are honored to be recognized by NLADA for our pro bono efforts that further equality. While the impacts of injustice are varied, the solutions can be remarkably similar: to create durable systems that revolve around our shared humanity, not our social differences. We align our pro bono work with the twin beliefs that the legal profession can help create, improve, and ultimately perfect these systems, and that a future free from discrimination and bias is possible.”**

**— Sharmaine Heng & Matt Richards, pro bono leads**



# PAUL HASTINGS

Paul Hastings' pro bono practice centers on work that benefits various low income and vulnerable individuals, families, and communities seeking to safeguard and expand their civil and human rights. Our work spans cases involving veterans' benefits, immigrant rights, domestic violence disputes, housing rights of low-income individuals, and work with individuals with autism and other developmental challenges. We have formed long-standing pro bono partnerships with a variety of organizations, such as the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP), Public Counsel, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, Kids In Need of Defense, Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, and the Williams Institute.

In partnership with the NVLSP and Public Counsel, we secured a landmark victory in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in *Beaudette v. McDonough*, striking down a Department of Veterans Affairs' rule that precluded hundreds of thousands of veterans and their family caregivers from appealing adverse benefits decisions.

In another partnership with the Washington Lawyers' Committee, we secured a favorable result in *Equal Rights Center v. Capital Properties Services, LLC*—a case in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia that challenged landlord violations of D.C. and federal housing and civil rights laws. *Beaudette v. McDonough*, No. 22-1264 (Fed. Cir.): In 2010, Congress created the Caregiver Program to provide benefits to caregivers of seriously injured combat veterans, including assistance with daily living activities for veterans and a monetary stipend for caregivers. The purpose of the program is to support veterans' caregivers and ensure they can provide the best care possible for their veteran loved ones. The Department of Veterans Affairs, however, did not allow benefits decisions under the Caregiver Program to be appealed outside of the VA—in contrast to other VA benefits decisions, which can be appealed to the Board of Veterans' Appeals and federal appellate courts. As a result, tens of thousands of veterans and caregivers

whose Caregiver Program benefits were denied or revoked lacked any meaningful way to challenge those decisions.

In July 2020, we filed a class action in the Veterans Court asking for a writ of mandamus to require the VA to allow Caregiver Program decisions to be appealed in the same way as other VA benefits decisions. In April 2021, the Veterans Court ordered that Board and judicial review be made available for pending and future Caregiver Program decisions. The court certified a class of past claimants and required the VA to provide them with the opportunity to pursue appeal rights for any past benefits denial. The VA appealed the Veterans Court's decision. After hearing argument in December 2023, the Federal Circuit issued a unanimous decision affirming the Veterans Court's ruling. The court of appeals held that Congress did not intend to preclude Board or judicial review of eligibility decisions under the Caregiver Program, aside from a narrow category of discretionary decisions "on the furnishing of assistance or support." The Federal Circuit also rejected the VA's reliance on its prior regulation, holding that, by its own terms, the regulation did not bar review outside of this narrow category. The court's ruling is of wide-reaching significance. The decision potentially affects over 400,000 veterans and caregivers denied benefits under the Caregiver Program, as well as any veterans and caregivers who will seek such benefits in the future.

By February 2024, almost 14,000 veterans and their caregivers had either appealed a Caregiver Program decision or submitted a supplemental claim or request for higher-level review. In addition to ensuring meaningful agency and judicial review under the Caregiver Program, the decision is also an important precedent that will help to shape pro-veteran interpretation of veterans' benefits statutes.

On behalf of the Equal Rights Committee and an individual, we brought a civil rights and housing rights action in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against the landlord of an apartment complex in Washington, D.C. Our client and another D.C. resident, both minorities, were prevented from obtaining available apartments at the complex because they were denied the right to use housing vouchers to show they had the ability to pay. We eventually secured a favorable result, vindicating the right of D.C. residents to use vouchers to secure housing without discrimination.

# Paul | Weiss

For nearly a century, Paul, Weiss has demonstrated a profound commitment to promoting civil rights, including by advocating before the Supreme Court to end racial segregation, in *Brown v. Board of Education*; establish the principle of "one person, one vote," in *Gray v. Sanders*; and ensure marriage equality, in *U.S. v. Windsor*, among other landmark cases.

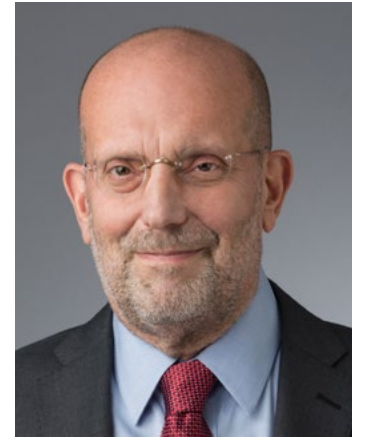
In 2023, we dedicated nearly 70,000 hours to pro bono work, a significant portion of which focused on the right to housing assistance, and the interplay of that core human and civil right with two complex issues that dominated national attention and converged in New York City: increasing homelessness and immigration at the Southern Border.

For over 40 years, New York City's right to shelter has ensured that anyone in need of shelter would receive it. The right is grounded in an early 1980s consent decree and court orders stemming from multiple lawsuits — many litigated by Steve Banks, then of the Legal Aid Society and now special counsel for Pro Bono at Paul, Weiss; and Brad Karp, then-Paul, Weiss associate and now firm chairman. It came under attack in 2023 when the city and state sought to suspend critical aspects of the decree, citing changed circumstances resulting from an influx of new arrivals from the Southern border. In fact, decades of inaction by the city and state to address an affordable housing crisis had resulted in increased levels of homelessness, a crisis exacerbated by the arrival of recent migrants and the city and state's inadequate response to their arrival.

Alongside Legal Aid, we represent the Coalition for the Homeless to protect the right to shelter.



*Brad Karp ,  
Chairman*



*Steven Banks ,  
Pro Bono Special Counsel*

We have argued that alternatives exist that would protect the right and prevent people from being forced to sleep on the streets and that the state-set public assistance rental allowance must be raised to help address the affordability crisis. Through our advocacy, we were able to settle the city's challenge and preserve the right to shelter.

Even as we litigated against the city to protect the right to shelter, we worked alongside the city to develop and launch an initiative aimed at identifying migrants living in city shelters who may be eligible for asylum or other relief, and assisting them with preparing and filing their immigration applications, one effect of which is to render the applicant eligible to obtain a work permit, thus increasing their economic independence and ability to leave shelter. Paul, Weiss was the lead law firm throughout this initiative, in which now dozens of law firms, private companies, law schools and other stakeholders participate. Over a few months, the coalition has assisted over 35,000 recent migrants get on the path to lawful employment and out of the shelter system.

**“Throughout its history, Paul, Weiss has dedicated itself to protecting and preserving civil and human rights, and we are honored and to be receiving this award for our efforts to secure shelter, dignity and refuge for tens of thousands of individuals.” — Steven Banks, Pro Bono Special Counsel**

# ReedSmith

Driving progress  
through partnership

Lamp Lifeboat Ladder (LLL) is Reed Smith's radical model for the successful resettlement of women refugees who are at high risk of further injury. What makes the project so innovative is that it provides survivors with end-to-end protection, from the point of flight (for example, Syria) to the point of self-reliance (Canada). No other program in the world does this.

Through a first-of-its-kind partnership with the Canadian government, LLL is providing a pathway for at least 90 refugee families (of some 500 individuals) to relocate to Canada and rebuild their lives. Unlike other refugee resettlement programs, LLL is built on funding from private donations to fulfill its mission while providing survivors with the social infrastructure they need to rebuild their lives. To date, 90 individuals from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa to Canada—mostly women and children survivors of torture and/or sexual violence—have been successfully resettled by LLL, with more cases in progress.

This project directly protects and advances the human rights of refugee survivors of sexual violence and/or torture, transforming their lives by bringing them from where they are not wanted to a place of safety. Canada named Reed Smith the project's implementing partner for its decades of on-the-ground experience representing survivors, along with already active refugee protection programs in Jordan and Greece. The firm's unique process includes hundreds of hours of intake, interviewing, drafting, submission, and holistic support. Reed Smith personnel and volunteer psychologists interview torture victims in the field in Jordan and Greece, and develop protection plans for those at imminent risk and cases for submission to Canada.

Unlike other programs for refugees, Lamp Lifeboat Ladder provides shelter and protection to survivors who have fled to Jordan or Greece, plus two years of support to refugees for housing, education, trauma recovery, and skills-building once resettled in Canada. Reed Smith attorneys and staff have devoted a total of 20,840 pro bono hours to this project since mid-2019, which carries a normal billable value of US\$19 million.



Left: Jayne Fleming, Human Rights Lawyer & International Director of Lamp Lifeboat Ladder, a Pro Bono Program of Reed Smith. Above: Jayne with members of the Dream Girls group in Amman, Jordan. Marwa Dakmak, Ahlam Alnatour, Angham Alnatour, Jayne Fleming, May Abu Nabout, Muzan Yousif, Sura Smadi.

Additionally, and separately from privately-funded resettlement costs in Canada, the operational costs of this program in Greece, Jordan, and Canada approximately US\$1 million annually. LLL team members come from ten countries on three continents and speak twelve languages. The program was created by Reed Smith Pro Bono Counsel Jayne Fleming in New York, who serves as international project director along with partner Duane Sigelko in Chicago; senior pro bono counsel Chris Walters in Philadelphia; EMEA pro bono counsel Becca Naylor and associate Mira Dandan in London; associates Panagiota Ntassiou and Dimitris Athanasopoulos in Athens; and associate Joern Halling in Munich.

Key partners who assist in the project include Canadian Center for Victims of Torture (CCVT) as its operational partner in Canada under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Canadian government. Other key partners include the Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Laboratory at Stanford University, the World Refugee & Migration Council (WRMC), and Médecins Sans Frontières. The LLL team also includes Mulugeta Abai, executive director of CCVT; Allan Rock, special advisor to WRMC and Canada's former Ambassador to the United Nations; Hanna Gros, Canadian legal director; Kolbassia Haoussou, director of Survivors Speak out; Holly Cooper, co-director of the UC Davis Immigration Law Clinic; and Daryn Reicherter, MD, of the Human Rights Lab at Stanford.



For decades, Shook, Hardy & Bacon has been on the front lines delivering legal advice to the most vulnerable individuals in our communities, and we've also taken some big swings, like representing the family of Nancy Cruzan in the landmark "right to die" case litigated before the U.S. Supreme Court.

However, in 2021, we made a conscious decision to improve our program by reinvesting in it. We hired Partner and Pro Bono Director Scot Fishman, who had a long history of leading successful law firm pro bono programs. We then embarked upon a quest to re-envision Shook's program through a new strategy: expanding our pro bono practice areas, engaging more lawyers, working smarter and more effectively and making a larger impact. After just one full year, we increased our average hours per lawyer by 34% and our participation by 65%.

Since January 2023, more than 98 Shook attorneys have devoted 5,537 hours to civil rights cases across the country. In one high profile case, Shook, ACLU of Kansas and Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice filed a class action lawsuit alleging the Wichita Police Department's use of a gang list is unconstitutional and violates community members' First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment Rights.

The complaint alleges the criteria to qualify as a gang member are vague, broad and encompass

a wide range of innocuous, innocent, and constitutionally protected behavior. Members of the Wichita community do not have to commit or even be charged with a criminal offense to be placed on the gang list. Once on the gang list, if a person is charged with a crime, they will face higher bond amounts, more severe probation and parole conditions, enhanced sentences, constant surveillance, harassment and discriminatory policing. The trial in this case is scheduled for later this year.

In another high profile case, Shook and co-counsel represented the NAACP of San Jose/Silicon Valley in a claim against the City of San Jose, California, after its police department attacked and injured racial justice protestors in May 2020. SJPD unlawfully fired hundreds of rounds of "less lethal" munition into the crowd, used batons to strike protestors repeatedly and pushed other individuals aggressively. In fact, they deployed so many rounds of munition into the crowd that they used up their entire supply on the very first day. Several people were seriously injured, and one bystander simply trying to walk home that day suffered the permanent loss of an eye. After thousands of hours dedicated to this effort, the San Jose City Council approved a combined settlement of \$3.35 million.

Shook is also partnering with the Pennsylvania Innocence Project to gain new trials using modern DNA testing for three men who were arrested as teenagers and convicted of a murder in 1997. We are arguing that these new tests show that the DNA found at the crime scene does not match the DNA of the men convicted of the crime. CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Delaware County Daily Times and other media outlets are following the case. A Delaware County Judge will decide if there is enough evidence to vacate the sentences and order new trials.



**"Earning the Beacon of Justice award from the highly respected NLADA reinforces Shook's commitment to change the lives of individuals and impact communities in a meaningful way. We are deeply honored." — Scot Fishman, Partner & Director of Pro Bono**

# Skadden

Skadden's dedication to pro bono work is a core aspect of our culture. Our founders believed not only in a lawyer's social responsibility, but that we all benefit when the legal system is accessible to everyone. Those views continue to thrive at Skadden, where we have dedicated nearly 3 million hours to pro bono over the last 15 years alone. Our pro bono work highlights an immense focus on civil and human rights. We are proud to have secured favorable outcomes in matters that address critical and life-saving issues for our clients and often have a wide-ranging impact.

In 2023, more than 40 attorneys firm-wide dedicated nearly 3,000 hours to death penalty work, and achieved appeals victories for two clients on death-row including: A U.S. Supreme Court victory on behalf of longtime pro bono client Rodney Reed, a Texas death-row inmate who has long claimed his innocence. The cert petition sought review of when the statute of limitations for a claim seeking DNA testing of crime-scene evidence begins to run. Following oral argument before the Supreme Court, a 6-3 majority opinion was issued in Mr. Reed's favor.

An Eighth Circuit ruling in favor of death-row inmate Stacey Johnson on two jurisdictional questions, clearing the way for him to argue that Arkansas' DNA-testing law violates due process and sue state officials.

In 2017, Skadden launched the Immigration Impact Project (IIP), a pro bono initiative utilizing virtual practice group models to drive efficiencies in the delivery of legal services to low-income immigrants. In 2023 alone, more than 35,000 hours were dedicated to immigration work.

Following New York City Mayor Adams' launch of the NYC Asylum Application Help Center, Skadden volunteers assisted more than 150 asylum seekers and their eligible family members with asylum applications. With Skadden's support, for the first time the Center surpassed its goal of 70 applications filed in one day.



*Brenna DeVaney, Chief Pro Bono Officer*

We assisted Legal Services NYC in piloting a new project to assist low-income immigrants interested in becoming citizens of the United States. Nearly 100 Skadden volunteers dedicated more than 1,000 hours to these efforts in 2023, and more than 20 low-income immigrants were assisted with their applications to naturalize and become U.S. citizens, or their applications for certificates of citizenship. A Skadden team secured a settlement win of over \$1 million, plus potential immigration relief, for approximately 100 Latino workers in a class action lawsuit following a largescale workplace immigration raid. The unlawful and excessively forceful raid took place at a meat processing plant. This rare win against the federal government and the substantial settlement was a profound demonstration of the workplace rights immigrants possess.

To further the impact of Skadden's work on civil and human rights, the firm regularly partners with legal aid organizations for various clinics. Examples of recent clinics and results include: The firm filed nearly 150 notices of claim (NOCs) and dedicated more than 1,240 hours in partnership with Bronx Defenders to assist victims of excessive force by the police. NOCs are required before an individual can pursue a civil rights case against the city, and they must comport with strict requirements, including a 90-day deadline to file from the date of the alleged incident.

# SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS

Squire Patton Boggs, throughout its history, has been deeply committed to pro bono work addressing a wide range of civil and human rights issues. The firm's Public Service Initiative (PSI) – our pro bono criminal justice practice group – leads this work with consequential innocence and death penalty litigation, juvenile life without parole cases and more.

PSI consists of a team of three attorneys and a paralegal dedicated full-time to advocacy on behalf of indigent clients. PSI's work in 2023 included the following:

PSI, along with co-counsel, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and a Yale Law School organization, presented evidence over a four-day hearing before the U.S. District Court – M.D. Alabama, that Christopher Barbour is actually innocent of the 1992 rape and murder for which he was convicted and sentenced to death. That evidence included, among other compelling proof, the results of modern DNA testing, which exclude Mr. Barbour from biological evidence left at the crime scene, and which identify the true perpetrator as the victim's neighbor, who is currently serving a life sentence for killing another woman. For more than two decades, Alabama adamantly opposed the DNA testing, which was finally granted in 2021, and the state continues to urge that Mr. Barbour should be procedurally barred from relief.

With co-counsel, including the Innocence Project, PSI represents Rodney Reed, who has been on Texas's death row since 1998, despite two execution dates. In the past two years, PSI and the rest of the legal team has presented powerful evidence of his innocence to the state courts. Despite this powerful evidence of innocence, the Texas Criminal Court of Appeals ruled against vacating Mr. Reed's conviction in the summer of 2023. Nevertheless, in April 2023, the legal team obtained a favorable U.S. Supreme Court decision – which ruled that Mr. Reed timely filed his challenge to Texas's post-conviction DNA testing statute, so that Mr. Reed can continue his effort to obtain DNA testing of the murder weapon. PSI and co-counsel also continue to challenge Mr. Reed's conviction in

the federal courts, including by filing a cert petition in the U.S. Supreme Court in November. In December, the legal team also filed a motion under Rule 60 in federal court to reopen Rodney Reed's federal habeas proceedings based on evidence of fraud by the state resulting in his habeas petition being denied in 2012.

The work of PSI is bolstered by criminal justice efforts across the firm. We have a robust criminal appellate practice, particularly in the 6th and 10th Circuits. In the 10th Circuit, SPB attorneys worked last year to seek withdrawal of our client's guilty plea where prior counsel told him, a Black man, that he would face an all-White jury if he proceeded to trial. Earlier this year, the 10th Circuit ruled in favor of our client and held that there was no knowing and voluntary waiver of his trial right because his plea counsel "materially misrepresented his right to an impartial jury selected through racially nondiscriminatory means."

In the 6th Circuit, SPB attorneys lead the Sixth Circuit Clinic at the University of Cincinnati College of Law, where, every year, our attorneys and students represent indigent clients in criminal appellate and habeas cases. Recent notable cases include what may become the first post-Bruen decision in the Sixth Circuit on the lifetime ban on firearm ownership for non-violent felons. SPB attorneys also obtained a new trial in Ohio v. Browning for our client in the final of a series of landmark decisions under the Ohio constitution regarding the right to a fair trial and ex parte communications with the judge. The firm's criminal justice work also includes representing clients at the trial level facing criminal charges, both in state and federal court, and taking on challenges to prison conditions. This includes the representation of an incarcerated client in a case under Section 1983 against a prison guard after an unprovoked and savage beating. We are also engaged in efforts to seek early release on behalf of incarcerated clients, through compassionate release, other judicial and statutory release mechanisms, and representation in front of the pardon board. SPB attorneys in Ohio work with the University of Akron as part of the Ohio Governor's Expedited Pardon Project to help eligible applicants who have demonstrated successful rehabilitative efforts obtain expedited consideration for a pardon. A team of SPB attorneys have also taken on a case under DC Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act to seek early release for a client convicted of murder as a young adult and who has shown remarkable growth and transformation while in prison.

# Steptoe

**S**teptoe has a longstanding commitment to pro bono work that advances civil and human rights on behalf of low income and vulnerable individuals and communities. In 2023, Steptoe engaged in pro bono work to address civil and human rights issues, including representing Afghan refugees, seeking resentencing of people in prison serving unjust sentences, death penalty representation, and civil rights advocacy for special education students. Steptoe also engaged in human rights work to advance the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Uganda. Below are some of the many ways Steptoe has shown its commitment to this important work:

Steptoe has a robust immigration practice and often represents those fleeing human rights violations in their home country. In 2023, Steptoe represented two Afghan families, totaling 13 adults & children, who were evacuated from Afghanistan after facing death threats and torture at the hands of the Taliban. The family was targeted because they assisted the U.S. military and are part of the persecuted Hazari ethnic minority. The families were brought to the U.S. to testify against Al Qaeda persecutors tied to terrorist activities and war crimes. The Steptoe team provided comprehensive advocacy for all of the family members by putting together their complex asylum claims, preparing and accompanying the clients to their asylum interviews, and navigating employment authorization issues. The team also assisted with a host of social service challenges due to the clients not being brought in as traditional refugees. The team helped establish cash assistance, housing, school enrollment, medical assistance, and many other services to find stability for the clients.

Steptoe represents several clients in death penalty cases. One of our clients, DeMontrell Miller, was

**"Steptoe has a longstanding commitment to pro bono work that advances civil and human rights for low-income and vulnerable individuals and communities. We are honored to be recognized for this important work by NLADA with a 2024 Beacon of Justice Award." — Paul Lee, Pro Bono Partner**



*L-R: Lee Paul, Pro Bono Partner; Harmony Jones, Pro Bono Counsel*

sentenced to death in Texas for allegedly killing his stepson. Since taking on Mr. Miller's representation, Steptoe's investigation revealed the State's medical experts used flawed science in determining the timing and nature of the child's injuries. The new evidence reveals that injuries likely occurred when the child was in the care of another person.

In 2016, Steptoe filed a federal habeas petition in Texas on Mr. Miller's behalf, and also exhausted Mr. Miller's remedies in state court. In 2023, Steptoe continued to zealously pursue justice on behalf of Mr. Miller in his federal habeas case.

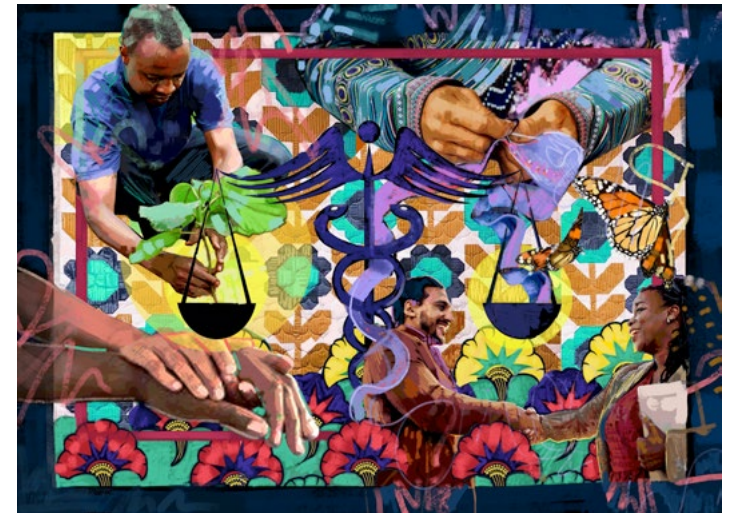
Steptoe is committed to representing those sentenced as juveniles and other people serving unreasonably long prison sentences in seeking to restore meaningful second chances. In 2023, Steptoe represented a client seeking resentencing under DC's IRAA Second Look Act. Our client was 19 years old at the time of his offenses, and was suffering from depression and drug addiction. He received a sentence of 15-45 years, and has already served over 25 years. Steptoe has also partnered with the ACLU Maryland Parole Project to represent five clients seeking release on parole. Our clients are all African-American men who have served decades of a life sentence in prison and have made great efforts to turn their lives around. Without pro bono representation, most of our clients would die in prison. As a result of our advocacy, two of our clients were recently released and another is scheduled to be released soon.

# STINSON

**I**n 2023, a large portion of Stinson's overall pro bono work focused on the advancement and protection of the civil and human rights of low-income and vulnerable individuals, families and communities.

In 2023, Stinson donated over 1,300 hours to work with The Advocates for Human Rights, an organization focused on the implementation of international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law around the world. In partnership with The Advocates, Stinson prepared multiple reports that informed advocacy efforts before the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances. With The Advocates and the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, Stinson prepared comments on proposed rules to limit the rights of asylum seekers and raise fees on a large number of immigration applications. In coordination with The Advocates and multiple immigrants' rights organizations throughout the country, Stinson provided thousands of hours of representation in 119 immigration matters, including asylum matters, U visas, T visas, applications for legal permanent residence and naturalization cases. Stinson secured asylum for all Afghan clients with decisions, while several others are still awaiting decisions. In Minneapolis, Stinson launched a project alongside the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota to provide limited scope legal assistance to noncitizen victims of crime as they prepare their U visa filings. This effort is designed to expand representation to U visa-eligible clients who may not find representation in matters that are now taking upwards of 10 years to reach resolution.

In 2023, Stinson donated more than a thousand hours to innocence, post-conviction relief, defense and criminal expungement matters that helped ensure access to representation to justice-involved individuals. One post-conviction matter, co-counseled with the Midwest Innocence Project, involves ongoing representation of a pro bono client believed to be wrongfully convicted of murdering his infant son based on discredited abusive head trauma or "shaken baby syndrome" science, in addition to evidence of ineffective assistance of counsel at trial. Stinson attorneys have dedicated a total of 4,796 hours to the case, including 737 hours donated in 2023 alone.



*Artwork commissioned in honor of the 30th anniversary of the Deinard Legal Clinic, Stinson's medical-legal partnership with Community University Health Care Center in Minneapolis.*

Recently, Stinson has partnered with the Corey Wise Innocence Project on another representation exploring innocence claims of an inmate convicted on similarly discredited scientific theories, along with claims related to police tactics that can result in false confessions. We also continued our commitment to pursuing criminal expungement and record sealing to help individuals with eligible offenses regain access to housing, jobs and public benefits.

Our partnership with the Freedom Network's Survivor Reentry Project focuses on identifying vacatur, expungement, sealing and other criminal record remedies for trafficking survivors nationwide.

In 2023, Stinson was engaged in multiple critical matters involving the civil liberties and rights of people across the country. In partnership with the ACLU of Kansas and ACLU-National, Stinson has intervened in a lawsuit between the Kansas Attorney General and the Kansas Department of Revenue on behalf of five transgender Kansans who could be irreparably harmed by the Kansas AG's efforts to ban and reverse changes to gender markers on driver's licenses.

In another lawsuit Stinson is co-counseling with the ACLU of Kansas and the National Prison Accountability Project, the legal team is arguing that individuals with mental illness are languishing in county jails throughout the state as they await competency hearings and restoration services, often leading to longer periods of incarceration than maximum sentencing guidelines allow before they are even offered the services needed to stand trial.



*Troutman Pepper collaborates with the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project to review innocence claims.*

**T**rutman Pepper is deeply committed to championing civil and human rights, strategically focusing our much of our pro bono work on three pivotal areas: social equity, immigration, and wrongful convictions. Our work is not just about providing legal services; it's about creating lasting change, driving impact, and transforming lives.

As part of our commitment to social equity, we also address the homelessness crisis in the U.S., partnering with organizations like the Inner-City Law Center. Our relentless efforts to combat homelessness in Los Angeles, from fighting unlawful convictions to standing up to slumlords, earned us the prestigious 2023 Katharine Krause Award. We also collaborate with the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP) in Pennsylvania, assisting housing insecure individuals with essential documents and services. Our work in this area is not just about providing legal aid, but about restoring dignity and hope to those most vulnerable.

In collaboration with the Pepper Center for Community Service, we devote thousands of hours annually to immigration cases. Our partnerships with HIAS-PA, Tahirih, KIND, CAIR, GAIN, and many other organizations enable us to assist clients with a broad range of immigration matters, from green card applications to asylum cases. Our tireless advocacy was recognized in 2023 with the Michael Maggio Memorial Pro Bono Award, a testament to

our relentless fight for justice, including the return of a client who was unjustly deported while his immigration proceedings were on appeal.

Lastly, our work addressing wrongful convictions and advocating for second chances underscores our commitment to justice. We have partnered with numerous legal services agencies to address inequities in our prison system and to fight for the rights of formerly and currently incarcerated individuals. Collaborating with the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project, we have reviewed innocence claims of incarcerated individuals to rectify miscarriages of justice. Our work with Regent Law School in Virginia and Rising for Justice focuses on providing expungements for victims of human trafficking and folks in underserved communities. This work is not just about clearing records; it's about providing a fresh start and reducing barriers to reintegration into society.

At Troutman Pepper, we believe in the power of law to effect change. Our pro bono work is not just a service; it's a commitment to uphold human dignity, champion justice, and create a more equitable society. Our work has brought tangible results, transforming lives and communities.

**“As a law firm deeply committed to civil and human rights, we at Troutman Pepper are honored to receive the “Beacon of Justice” award for our social equity, immigration, and wrongful convictions pro bono work. Our efforts, which extend beyond providing legal services, aim to uphold human dignity, champion justice, and foster a more equitable society, thus transforming lives and creating lasting change.”**

— Sara Richman, Partner & Chair of Pro Bono



**W**iley prides itself on a strong tradition of service to the local and global community and encourages its attorneys and legal assistants to participate in pro bono activities, which receive the full support of the firm and its resources. A key part of Wiley's pro bono mission is to provide equal access to the justice system for individuals and groups otherwise unable to afford counsel. Wiley attorneys have advanced this mission through matters focusing on civil and human rights, including aiding an Afghan refugee family seeking asylum in the U.S.; advocating on behalf of immigrant children held in a juvenile-detention facility; securing a settlement on behalf of incarcerated women denied basic medical care; arguing on behalf of “juvenile lifers”; and obtaining reduced sentences for prisoners under the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act. These matters represent just a small percentage of Wiley's important pro bono work, but are notable for their impact on the lives of those represented, and the changes brought about as a result of the representation Wiley provided.

From 2022-2023, Wiley attorneys represented an Afghan refugee family seeking asylum in the preparation and submission of asylum applications to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The father in the family is a former Fulbright Scholar who worked for the Afghan government in close collaboration with the U.S. and other Western interests before its collapse and demise in July 2021. He was within a class of former government officials targeted for imprisonment, torture, and likely execution by the Taliban. A decision granting all family members asylum was issued by USCIS in December 2023. Wiley has also secured continued pro bono victories on behalf of unaccompanied immigrant children who were, until recently, housed at the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center. Many of these children, who fled to the U.S. after experiencing violence in their home countries, struggle with severe mental illness as a result of their trauma, yet were subjected to a pattern of excessive



*Left: Mary Borja, Chair of the Pro Bono Committee; Right: Theodore A. Howard, Pro Bono Partner*

**“Wiley prides itself on a strong tradition of service to the local and global community, especially in matters and initiatives involving civil and human rights. We are grateful and honored to be a recipient of the 2024 Beacon of Justice Award.”**

— Theodore A. Howard, Pro Bono Partner

force, unnecessary and punitive seclusion, and deprivation of adequate mental health care at the facility.

Eventually, the Fourth Circuit ruled that a facility detaining unaccompanied children must provide services consistent with professional mental health care standards. As of 2023, the facility canceled its contract with the Office of Refugee Resettlement, admitting that it could not provide the mental health care contemplated by the Fourth Circuit, and the immigrant children are no longer being housed there.

Another of Wiley's recent pro bono victories has been its negotiation of a settlement on behalf of nearly 1,200 prisoners at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women. The lawsuit alleged that the Virginia Department of Corrections and its for-profit medical care contractors violated the female inmates' constitutional rights by failing to provide adequate medical care in contravention of the Eighth Amendment prohibition against “cruel and unusual punishment.” In 2023, Wiley attorneys continued to track the facility's compliance with the terms of the settlement.



L-R: Pro Bono team members Dorian Needham, Erin Meyer, Anne Bowie, Leigh Hillebrand, and Hannah Bundy.

In 2023, WilmerHale continued its unbroken commitment to equal justice through its pro bono civil and human rights work. What follows is only a small sample of our efforts.

WilmerHale, with co-counsel ACLU of Colorado, achieved a significant settlement to reform school disciplinary processes for children with disabilities after police arrested and detained an 11-year-old child with autism. After the child poked a schoolmate with a pencil, school resource officers arrested, handcuffed, and dragged the child through the hallways, detaining him in a police car for three hours where he sustained injuries from his repeated head banging. Without receiving any medical attention, the police held him in a juvenile detention facility, on charges of assault and resisting arrest, until his parents posted a \$25,000 bond.

In a lawsuit commenced in 2021, WilmerHale and the ACLU sought to hold the school district and resource officers accountable for violating the child's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fourth Amendment. The complaint alleged a pattern and practice of officers mishandling situations involving students with disabilities, unnecessarily ensnaring such students in the criminal legal system. Further, it alleged the county had a long, disturbing record of disproportionately putting children with disabilities into restraints and referring them to law enforcement, causing additional trauma while reinforcing the school-to-prison pipeline.

The 2023 settlement requires important school district policy changes to make schools safer for students with disabilities, including mandating school resource officers to receive training from the disability rights community, review and comply with each student's behavioral improvement plan, and report on their interventions with disabled students.

In January 2024, WilmerHale obtained a victory for a class of approximately 600 deaf and hard-of-hearing prisoners in the custody of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections (DOC). The federal district court issued a post-trial opinion finding that the DOC violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act for failing to

**“WilmerHale is honored to receive the Beacon of Justice Award in recognition of the firm’s victories in pro bono civil rights litigation challenging state legislative maps that unlawfully dilute Black Georgians’ voting power, school disciplinary practices that harm children with autism, and prison conditions that endanger people in custody who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.” — Erin Marie Meyer, Pro Bono**

#### Counsel

provide the class with equal access to emergency notifications. The lawsuit was filed in 2015 and the parties settled most of the issues in 2019, but the case went to trial in 2023 because the DOC refused to provide an effective emergency alarm system and evacuation procedures for people in custody who are deaf or hard of hearing. Class members testified to their experiences missing fire drills because they were unable to hear them or were not notified by DOC officers. The court found that the class's access to emergency notification systems was not meaningful under the ADA and that the DOC's cost estimate for installing visual alarms was overstated. The court ordered the DOC to develop an institution-wide policy to provide the class with access to emergency notifications such as visual fire alarms by May 2024.



Wilson Sonsini obtained grants of asylum in 12 separate matters in 2023. These clients are from countries across the globe, including Afghanistan, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mongolia, and Tibet. A highlight from 2023 was securing grants of asylum for four women from Afghanistan. The women were part of a larger cohort comprised of Afghani students. The firm is now representing these brave women in seeking to obtain their green cards.

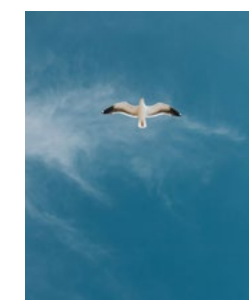
The firm is a participant in the ACLU of Louisiana's initiative to challenge racially discriminatory policing practices. We have represented brave Black women in civil rights actions, including those involving the alleged use of excessive force. In 2023, our client became a rare plaintiff to survive a summary judgment motion against a Monell claim—in this instance, the plaintiff's allegation that the City of Kenner inadequately trained officers. This notable ruling will assist future plaintiffs seeking to hold police departments accountable for inadequate training and oversight, regardless of the ultimate outcome of this case. The case is set for trial in July 2024.

In recent years, many states have sought to ban transgender girls from playing on girls' sports teams, with deleterious impacts on their mental health. In 2022, Utah passed H.B. 11, a law barring all transgender girls from kindergarten through high school from competing on girls' sports teams. Since that time, Wilson Sonsini, alongside co-counsel, has vigorously litigated on behalf of two

students, initially obtaining a preliminary injunction order blocking the enforcement of H.B. 11. The matter is ongoing.

The firm supports nonprofit organizations and clients working to eradicate human trafficking. In 2023, we represented 10 different individuals and supported organizations including Alliance to Lead Impact in Global Human Trafficking (ALIGHT), Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST), and The Medusa Project. For example, one pro bono team vacated over 30 criminal records for a brave survivor; the client will now be able to move forward with her life professionally. In addition, teams secured a T Visa on behalf of a child survivor of labor trafficking from China, secured a name change on behalf of a client to help them avoid being found by their trafficker, and served as victim advocates in three human trafficking criminal prosecutions/investigations.

For several years, a team from Wilson Sonsini has been representing an incarcerated individual on death row in Florida for his federal habeas petition. The evidence against him included only a positive DNA sample, which was not corroborated by any other evidence or conceivable motive. The focus of the appeal is the legitimacy of the DNA evidence and the failure of public defenders to challenge its admissibility. The habeas petition has been certified to the Eleventh Circuit and oral argument is scheduled for June 2024. Separately, in 2023, another team secured a reversal for an inmate in Illinois who suffered severe injuries while working in prison. Despite the initial dismissal of the officer who ordered the inmate to work under hazardous conditions, on appeal the Seventh Circuit determined that the officer's actions violated the inmate's Eighth Amendment rights, clarifying that officers must actively reduce risks, not just report them.



**“Wilson Sonsini is honored to receive the Beacon of Justice Award for 2024, to be recognized by NLADA for our civil and human rights pro bono work. NLADA is a true pioneer and leader in the access to justice movement.” — Luke Liss, Pro Bono Partner**

# Yetter Coleman

Trials | Appeals

**Y**etter Coleman has a long history of impactful pro bono work addressing civil and human rights issues, particularly those affecting vulnerable populations. Our most extensive work protects Texas children. For the past 12 years, we relentlessly have pursued statewide reform of a foster care system that a federal judge found to be “broken” and dangerous. The lives of some 9,000 children in state custody are at stake. So far, we have dedicated 16,714 pro bono hours to this reform, targeting systemic issues like rampant abuse and neglect of the children, chronic over-medication, crushing caseworker caseloads, and placements in motels and other unsuitable facilities that are magnets for sex trafficking.

We are in the fourth year of enforcing remedial orders put in place by the district judge and upheld by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, the most conservative appeals court in the nation. But change is only grudgingly made by state executives who, for political reasons, chafe at being ordered by a federal court to protect these children.

Beyond that institutional reform litigation, Yetter Coleman is always active in meaningful pro bono work. Some of our recent human-rights work includes the following: We co-authored an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court in *U.S. v. Rahimi* on behalf of the Houston Area Women’s Center. This case will decide whether federal law prohibiting firearm possession by domestic abusers violates the Second Amendment.

We assisted in numerous immigration cases, preventing vulnerable individuals from being returned to dangerous situations.

For example, the firm partnered with Kids in Need of Defense to represent a child who fled death threats in her home country, sending her on a solo journey from El Salvador to the Texas border when she was only thirteen years old. Our advocacy kept the young woman from being sent back to an unsafe environment, earning recognition from the State Bar of Texas. We devoted significant time to habeas cases, ensuring that those facing the death penalty receive the fair trial and representation that they are guaranteed. Our involvement focuses on upholding the rights of the accused and ensuring that the justice system works for everyone, regardless of economic status. In 2023, the Capital Punishment Center at the University of Texas School of Law asked us to file a habeas petition on behalf of a death row inmate recently convicted for the death of a woman. We partner extensively with Houston Volunteer Lawyers to provide pro bono legal services to marginalized and underserved groups in the Houston area. This includes guardianship clients needing legal authority to act on behalf of disabled children, clients needing help in disputes with landlords, survivors of domestic abuse seeking divorce, and elderly clients hoping to draft wills. Each of these clients falls at or below the poverty line.

Finally, we have been at the frontlines of the fight to increase access to controlled substances for those with chronic pain or terminal illness. We have litigated against federal agencies, including representing an employee who was improperly terminated for the use of hemp-based pain-relief products.



**“At Yetter Coleman, our commitment to public service is woven into the fabric of our practice and firm. As trial attorneys, we recognize the transformative powers of advocacy to change lives, and we are proud to leverage our skills to champion social justice and equality for those who need it most.”**

**- Amy Farish, Partner & Firm Bono Coordinator**



ZUCKERMAN  
SPAEDER

**F**or decades, Zuckerman Spaeder attorneys have tackled complex pro bono matters with an aim toward creating sustainable change and fostering social and economic equity. This goal has led us to prioritize the protection and advancement of civil and human rights — and in 2023, our work delivered important and sometimes precedent-setting results that defended the results of marginalized people and fought discrimination.

Our immigration advocacy has been substantial and varied. In one matter, our team recently obtained a precedent-setting decision in a housing discrimination case with national repercussions for tenants and immigrants. In partnership with Legal Aid of Virginia, in 2023, Zuckerman Spaeder represented a series of plaintiffs who challenged a landlord’s misuse of a federal anti-harboring statute to discriminate against immigrants during the leasing process. In a unanimous Fourth Circuit decision this year, the Court Sided with our clients, condemning the landlord’s practice. As the Court put it, if left unchallenged this practice would “facilitate the gratuitous infliction of homelessness upon countless numbers of people residing in this country.” Underscoring the importance of our lawsuit, the Department of Labor and national civil rights and fair housing advocates participated in amicus briefs on behalf of the plaintiffs.

In another matter, we partnered with the ACLU of Florida and Southern Poverty Law Center to sue the Marion County Sheriff’s Office in Florida for profiling and illegally detaining a lawful permanent resident on suspicion of being in the country unlawfully. The Sheriff’s Office had a policy of detaining and referring to ICE individuals they perceived to be foreign born, regardless of nationality or immigration status. In 2023, we obtained a settlement which included requiring the office to make much-needed reforms, including a mandate that no person may be held in custody or subject to delayed release solely because they were born abroad.

Over several years, we have worked closely with Capital Area Immigrants Rights (CAIR) Coalition to represent clients in matters related to deportations, family court proceedings, immigration bail hearings, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. In 2023, we also represented multiple other children in seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in various state court systems and then before the department of homeland security.

As the transgender community’s visitability has grown, so too have threats to their rights. Alongside ACLU of Missouri, Zuckerman Spaeder sued a transgender woman’s employer and health plan for denying coverage for treatment of gender dysphoria despite purporting to cover mental health treatment and prescribed gender transition surgeries, her health plan denied coverage based on the exclusion that deemed all gender confirmation surgeries on the face, head, or neck as “cosmetic” and never medically necessary. The core of our lawsuit survived a motion to dismiss — which was soon followed by a confidential settlement that received federal court approval in 2023. Our win on the motion was precedent-setting — standing as a first-of-its-kind decision demonstrating the viability of ERISA and Mental Health Parity Act challenges to end insurer’s gender dysphoria discrimination.

The firm continued its commitment to pursuing civil rights by representing a Baltimore couple in federal litigation relating to the Baltimore city’s use of a housing ordinance. This ordinance ostensibly allowed landlords to seize, and then keep or sell tenants’ property. Our work led to an emphatic ruling that the ordinance violated our clients’ due process rights, required payment of significant damages, and led to meaningful policy changes. A federal district court’s ruling will continue to protect tenants in Baltimore generally, as it held that the City must provide tenants with an opportunity to retrieve, post-eviction, the possessions that they did not intend to abandon.

The firm continues its active practice of representing individuals with criminal convictions or a criminal history in expunging or sealing these records. It is well known that criminal contacts, arrest, and convictions can be a barrier to employment, housing, and other services. In 2023, the firm represented multiple individuals in DC seeking to seal or set aside their criminal history. We view this extensive pro bono sealing practice as part of a wider effort to ensure equality, and we take on these cases regardless of the nature of the underlying criminal history.

## Support NLADA

### Partner with NLADA in scaling justice in America to 100 percent!

There are many ways for advocates of access to equal justice to support NLADA, including becoming a member, donating pro-bono hours or making a financial contribution in support of our mission.

To make a 100 percent tax-deductible contribution online, click [HERE](#).

#### You can also:

- Become a valued contributor with our monthly sustainer giving program
- Make a contribution in honor of a colleague, mentor or friend, or as a memorial to a loved one
- Ask your employer about matching your gift
- Make a gift of appreciated stock
- Create a personal fundraiser benefiting NLADA on Facebook
- Look for us during the annual CFC campaign—#10490
- Make a bequest

#### Companies and law firms can also:

- Join national corporate leaders as a member of our Corporate Advisory Committee
- Activate pro-bono representation
- Inquire about creating a tailored cause marketing program for your company
- Ask about other in-kind support

We look forward to making a difference with you!

For more information on these and other opportunities, please contact:

**Aileen Moffatt**

Vice President, External Relations:

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**Because the quality of justice in America should not depend on how much money a person has, NLADA leads a broad network of advocates on the frontlines to advance justice and expand opportunity for all by promoting excellence in the delivery of legal services for people who cannot afford**

**2024 Beacon of Justice Awards**