

Wiley Rein Recognizes 19 Individuals in Fifth Annual Pro Bono Program Celebration

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Press Contact

Patricia O'Connell

T: 202.719.4532

poconnell@wiley.law

Related Professionals

Washington, DC—On November 1, Wiley Rein honored 19 individuals for their outstanding commitment and contributions to pro bono matters. These deserving lawyers and professional staff, recognized during the firm's fifth annual Pro Bono Program Celebration, were selected by a joint subcommittee of the firm's Pro Bono and Associates committees, after nominations were solicited from attorneys throughout the firm.

Managing Partner Peter D. Shields served as master of ceremonies for the awards. He thanked the members of the Pro Bono Committee for their efforts, noting the committee is led by chair Gary P. Seligman and co-chairs Robert D. Benton and Kathryn Bucher, who work closely with the firm's Pro Bono Partner Theodore A. Howard. "We're extremely fortunate to have Ted at the helm of our pro bono efforts," said Mr. Shields. "His work and reputation are well-known, and we're proud that our firm is involved in such a wide array of matters helping community and legal service providers alike."

Awards were given to the following individuals and teams for their work with key nonprofit partners:

Team Awards

- **Obtaining Reversal in Asylum Case** – Partners **Theodore A. Howard** and **Charles C. Lemley**, of counsel **Edgar Class**, and

legal assistant **Paul Coyle**. In a matter referred by the **Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition**, the firm represented a young refugee who had fled homelessness and gang violence in his native Honduras to make his way alone to the United States at age 15. In June 2016, an Immigration Court in Virginia issued a decision denying all relief and setting the stage for our client's deportation back to Honduras – where he faced nearly certain death at the hands of a notorious gang. The team successfully appealed this decision to the Board of Immigration Appeals, obtaining a resounding reversal. Then, on remand this past summer, after supplemental briefing and argument, the same Immigration Judge who had previously ruled against our client entered a decision granting asylum. This decision recognized a new class of applicants improperly characterized as former gang members – and the ruling may pave the way for significant numbers of unaccompanied immigrant minors to obtain protection under U.S. immigration laws. The firm has a long-standing relationship with the CAIR Coalition, which serves as a primary source of legal assistance for detained immigrants, including adults and children, in the DC metropolitan area.

- **Representing Juvenile Justice Group in Arbitration Matter** – Partner **Bennett L. Ross**, associate **Derrick A. Petit**, and practice support coordinator **Linda Ahrens**. Wiley Rein was engaged to represent a nonprofit network focused on the promotion of state-based juvenile justice reform, after the organization became engaged in a contract dispute with a coalition that had served as its financial sponsor. The coalition had provided the network with fiduciary oversight and other support services in addition to serving as the conduit for financial contributions to the nonprofit. After the coalition abruptly terminated the contract between the parties in 2016, with unaccounted-for funds that had been contributed to the coalition on the network's behalf, Wiley Rein was asked to assist the network in negotiating a resolution. When those efforts failed, our client invoked its arbitration rights and the team prepared the case for hearing. After extensive written discovery and the deposition of the coalition's former CEO, the coalition agreed to settle the matter for a significant damages payment to our client and reimbursement of the arbitration

Mary E. Borja
Partner
202.719.4252
mborja@wiley.law

Kathryn Bucher
Partner
202.719.7530
kbucher@wiley.law

Edgar Class
Partner
202.719.7504
eclass@wiley.law

Ashley L. Criss
Associate
202.719.3565
acriss@wiley.law

Theodore A. Howard
Partner
202.719.7120
thoward@wiley.law

Bennett L. Ross
Partner
202.719.7524
bross@wiley.law

Kathleen E. Scott
Partner
202.719.7577
kscott@wiley.law

Gary P. Seligman
Partner
202.719.3587
gseligman@wiley.law

Peter D. Shields
Managing Partner
202.719.3249
pshields@wiley.law

Richard A. Simpson
Partner
202.719.7314
rsimpson@wiley.law

Gary S. Ward
Partner
202.719.7571
gsward@wiley.law

Wesley E. Weeks
Partner
202.719.7569
wweeks@wiley.law

Practice Areas

Issues and Appeals
Litigation

initiation fee.

- **The Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative** – Partners **Richard A. Simpson** and **Mary E. Borja**, and associates **Tara L. Ward**, **Gary S. Ward**, and **Alexander H. Merritt**. Approximately 300 prisoners are serving sentences of life without parole in Maryland for crimes they committed as juveniles, and many of these individuals have now been incarcerated for decades. Although the U.S. Supreme Court, in a series of decisions over the last 10 years, has determined that life without parole sentences for offenders under the age of 18 violate the Eighth Amendment in holdings that have been given retroactive effect, the Maryland Parole Board and the Governor’s office have repeatedly refused to give meaningful consideration to the requests of the affected prisoners to be released based on exemplary records for good conduct and rehabilitation. In conjunction with the **Maryland ACLU**, the Wiley Rein team has so far devoted more than 800 hours to important federal litigation challenging the unlawfulness of Maryland’s continuing refusal to consider the affected individuals for parole as the U.S. Constitution requires.
- **Ban-the-Box Legislative Analysis** – Associates **Kathleen E. Scott** and **Ashley A. Criss** and legal assistant **Kristen Cook**. In so-called ban-the-box laws, prospective landlords, employers, and others are precluded from categorically rejecting applicants for housing, jobs, etc., based on an applicant’s prior arrest record or criminal conviction. Although the DC Council has enacted such a law, it lacks teeth with respect to enforcement, because the only avenue for redress afforded individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in violation of the law is an administrative appeal to the DC Office of Human Rights – where the backlog of undecided appeals numbers in the thousands and resolutions may take years to be completed. The **DC Employment Justice Center**, in anticipation of a lobbying effort to persuade the DC Council to consider amending its law to include a right to sue, asked Wiley Rein to conduct a nationwide analytical survey to determine the existence and efficacy of local ban-the-box laws that include a private right of action for victims of discrimination. The team devoted nearly 200 hours to work on this project, which yielded a state-of-the-art spreadsheet reflecting a comprehensive analysis of all the laws across the country addressing this subject matter.

Individual Contributions

In addition to the team awards, five individuals were recognized for their extraordinary commitment and achievement:

- **Madeline J. Cohen**, associate, devoted nearly 300 hours to involvement in nine different pro bono matters, including at least 20 hours each on five matters ranging from representation of individuals in immigration matters to substantial contribution to an *amicus* brief that was filed on behalf of some 70 prominent public interest law organizations in the U.S. Supreme Court.
- **Paul Coyle**, legal assistant, devoted more than 200 hours of his time to involvement in five matters, in addition to receiving a team award for an asylum case.
- **Wheknown Jasper-Booker**, senior legal assistant, who is a perennial pro bono stalwart, contributed her time and talents to 10 different pro bono matters over the past year.

- **Parker J. Lavin**, partner – Mr. Lavin continued to be an integral part of the firm’s Pro Bono Program, committing nearly 225 hours to involvement in four significant pro bono matters, including 150 hours to the ongoing Americans with Disabilities Act discrimination case against a major university.
- **Wesley E. Weeks**, associate – In a case referred to the firm by the Pro Se litigation panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Mr. Weeks devoted nearly 100 hours to the briefing of an appeal on behalf of an entire family of persecuted immigrants who will be returned to their native country to face an uncertain future if the appeal does not succeed.

2017 Pro Bono MVP Award

In a year of outstanding efforts for the firm, **Edgar Class** was selected for special “MVP” recognition. Mr. Class devoted more than 300 hours to pro bono work in the past year in connection with the asylum case on behalf of the refugee from Honduras, a matter that garnered a team pro bono award. He developed a special relationship of trust with this client, and took personal measures to ensure that the young man was supported in the matter beyond pure legal representation. These efforts included traveling to the detention facility late at night to pick him up and drive him back to the DC area, when our client had no other means of transportation at that time of night, and getting food and clothes for the client upon his release.