

NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

# Pro Bono News

2021 Empire State Counsel® Spotlight Edition





## Message from Immediate Past President **Scott Karson**

It is difficult for me to come to grips with the fact that when this article is published, several months will have elapsed since the completion of my term as the 123rd President of the New York State Bar Association.

Since I left office, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the Association during my term, as well as the disappointments, particularly the disappointment resulting from the fact that my presidency was entirely virtual – no live events or interaction, and no travel.

Nevertheless, one thing that stands out – and is a source of great pride to me – is the selfless pro bono service performed by so many of our members during this most difficult and demanding year.

One such group of dedicated pro bono volunteers were those individuals and firms that were recognized for their extraordinary pro bono service as Empire State Counsel at the 2021 Justice for All Ceremony. I, along with then President Elect T. Andrew Brown, Edwina Martin, Tiffany Liston and Past President Michael Miller – had the privilege of introducing and honoring these worthy professionals.

The ceremony was made even more memorable by the participation (albeit virtual) of New York’s Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Edwina Mendelson and Attorney General Letitia James.

The honorees included those lawyers who earned the coveted designation as Empire State Counsel by performing 50 hours or more of pro bono service in 2020.

We also recognized four individual attorneys and six law firms for their extraordinary pro bono service for the public good.

The individual honorees included pro bono volunteers Anne Sargent Arcano and Richard Mancino; and Erica Gomez and Gary B. Friedman, recipients of the 2020 COVID-19 Pro Bono Surrogate’s Court Initiative Award.

With respect to firms, we recognized the downstate firms of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, LLP; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison; and Kirkland & Ellis LLP. The upstate firms receiving recognition included Barclay Damon LLP; Phillips Lytle LLP; and Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC.

The ceremony served as a reminder of the importance of pro bono work.

Especially in the time of a pandemic, it is not just the right thing to do – it is the essential thing to do. This is our calling as lawyers. We are the guardians of justice. A guardian’s role is to protect and defend. As lawyers, our charge is to use our unique knowledge and abilities to seek justice for our clients, including those clients who are in dire need of our services but are not in a position to compensate us. We most faithfully fulfill our calling when we use our skills to help people who would otherwise be without protection, without defense.

Equal justice is the bedrock principle of our nation. Without equal justice the phrase from the Declaration of Independence, “[A]ll men are created equal” – is hollow. Without justice, evenly applied, the “unalienable rights” of “Life, Liberty, the pursuit of Happiness” are mere words.

There is no higher form of public service than working pro bono publico; i.e., working for the public good to ensure access to equal justice. Every time we help one person, right one wrong, we are one step closer to living up to the promise of our nation.

# 2020 Participating Firms

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Alston & Bird LLP  
Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP  
Ballard, Spahr LLP  
Barclay Damon, LLP  
Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC  
Cops DiPaola Silverman, PLLC  
Crowell & Moring LLP  
Davis, Polk & Wardell LLP  
Dentons LLP  
Fish & Richardson P.C.  
Hogan Lovells LLP  
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP  
Kobre & Kim LLP  
Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP  
Linklaters LLP  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP  
McCarter & English, LLP  
Morrison & Foerster LLP  
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP  
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP  
Phillips Lytle LLP  
Proskauer Rose LLP  
Ropes & Gray LLP  
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP  
Sullivan & Cromwell LLP  
Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

# 2021 Empire State Counsel® Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers and Law Firm Honorees

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## Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

**Anne Sargent Arcano**

The Pace Women's Justice Center

**Richard Mancino, Esq.**

Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

## Law Firm Honorees

**Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP**

**Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP**

**Kirkland & Ellis LLP**

**Phillips Lytle LLP**

**Barclay Damon LLP**

**Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC**

## 2020 Covid-19 Pro Bono Surrogate's Court Initiative Award

**Gary B. Freidman, Esq.**

Greenfield Stein & Senior, LLP

**Erica Gomez, Esq.**

Associate Court Attorney, Surrogate's Court, New York County

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## Committee on Legal Aid

**Sally Curran, Esq.**, *Executive Director at Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc.*

**Adriene Holder, Esq.**, *Attorney -in-charge Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society*

## President's Committee on Access to Justice

**Sherry Levin Wallach, Esq.**, *New York State Bar Association President-Elect and Deputy Executive Director, The Westchester County Legal Aid Society.*

**Edwina Frances Martin, Esq.**, *Commissioner and Public Administrator, Richmond County*

**Tiffany Liston, Esq.**, *Executive Director, Mobilization for Justice, Inc.*

# VOLUNTEER FOR FREE LEGAL ANSWERS™

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# Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

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## Anne Sargent Arcano

Anne Sargent Arcano began her legal career at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, as an associate in its corporate tax practice. After taking time off to raise a family, Anne returned to practice law as a volunteer attorney, first at Lawyers Alliance for New York, which provides business and transactional legal services to nonprofit organizations in New York City. Four years ago, Anne joined the team of volunteers at the Pace Women's Justice Center.

The Pace Women's Justice Center (PWJC) is a non-profit organization in Westchester County that provides free legal services to victims and survivors of domestic violence, elder abuse, and sexual assault. PWJC provides a variety of legal services to members of the community, including a Legal Helpline, three Walk-in Clinics, a Family Law Unit, an Elder Justice Unit, and a Sexual Assault Unit. PWJC staff and its more than 60 volunteers provide legal assistance to over 4,000 clients annually.

On the PWJC Legal Helpline, Anne provides information and guidance to

callers on a variety of issues. While the vast majority of callers have questions regarding family law, domestic violence or elder abuse, many seek practical information about housing court, negotiating consumer debt, navigating the public benefits system, and understanding wills and advance directives.

Anne also volunteers at PWJC's Walk-In Legal Clinic, which provides immediate assistance to victims and survivors of abuse on a limited-scope basis by offering free consultations. Clients who have experienced abuse face particular challenges in navigating the legal system and issues pertaining to divorce, child custody and support. Anne works with PWJC clients to make sure their legal decisions are informed, thought out, safe, and well planned, ensuring that clients understand the process, and access the type of services they need in order to live in safety.

Anne graduated from Georgetown University Law Center (J.D., cum laude, Lead Articles Editor, *The Tax Lawyer*) and New York University (L.L.M. in Tax).

# Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

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**Richard Mancino, Esq.**  
**Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP**

Richard Mancino is a litigation partner at Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP, an international law firm, joining the firm as an associate in 1982. At Willkie, he focuses on complex corporate and commercial litigation, including cases involving cross-border reinsurance and insurance, M&A, and bankruptcy disputes. With a national trial and appellate practice, Richard has appeared before federal and state courts throughout the country, including most of the federal courts of appeals.

Over the course of his legal career, Richard has devoted thousands of hours on pro bono matters, all while maintaining an active litigation practice. He has consistently dedicated himself to fighting injustice for the underprivileged through pro bono efforts on behalf of asylum seekers, the LGBT+ community, unrepresented children, low-income New Yorkers and others. Recently, he led a Willkie team in representing the County of El Paso, Texas and the Border Network for Human Rights in *El Paso County v. Trump*, in which the district court enjoined President Trump's declaration of a national emergency to misappropriate and misdirect funds to construct a border wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. He also helped obtain a key voters' rights win in *Richardson v. Texas Secretary of State* when a Texas federal court enjoined Texas's use of signature-matching procedures for mail-in ballots, deeming it unconstitutional. Working with City Bar Justice Center's Immigrant Justice Project since 2008, Richard and lawyers working under

his supervision have won asylum for numerous clients from around the world in complex, challenging cases. He recently partnered with the CBJC in challenging federal regulations on immigration which would redesign the current asylum system and restructure immigration courts, all to the detriment of asylum seekers. Working with the Children's Law Center, Richard also led a Willkie team in an international child abduction case, successfully advocating that the children should stay in New York with their mother after fleeing an abusive religious sect in Guatemala.

Since the early 1990s, Richard has served as a court-appointed mediator in the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York, helping litigants settle their lawsuits thereby reducing the courts' dockets. He is also a member of the board of directors of the City Bar Fund of the New York City Bar Association, which oversees the City Bar Justice Center, among other public service initiatives.

In recognition of his pro bono contributions, Richard has been recognized as an NYSBA Empire State Counsel® honoree for several years. He was also awarded the New York City Bar Justice Center's Jeremy G. Epstein Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Service and was named a "Lawyer Who Leads by Example" by the New York Law Journal for his "outstanding record of providing crucial legal services to poor or nearly poor New Yorkers." In 2019, he was shortlisted for "Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year" at the Chambers USA Diversity and Inclusion Awards.

# 2020 Covid-19 Pro Bono Surrogate's Court Initiative Award

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**Gary B. Freidman, Esq.**

Gary B. Freidman graduated from St. John's University School of Law in 1978 and was admitted to the New York bar in 1979. He received a master's degree in Taxation from New York University Graduate School of Law in 1982. Mr. Freidman received his B.A. in Economics from Queens College of the City University of New York in 1975.

From 1979 to 1981, Mr. Freidman served as an appellate law assistant to the Justices of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, Second Judicial Department. There, he was responsible for the preparation of confidential bench memoranda analyzing pending appeals for the Justices. In 1981, he joined Greenfield Stein & Senior, LLP (then known as Greenfield Eisenberg Stein & Senior) as an associate, becoming a member of the firm in 1986. His practice is in trust and estate related litigation. Mr. Freidman has been involved in numerous contested Surrogate's Courts proceedings, both as an advocate and a mediator and has participated in trials and hearings in the Surrogate's Courts. These matters involved diverse issues such as the extent to which an in terrorem clause may be enforced, the validity of a charitable remainder unitrust, investment loss disputes, objections to wills and accountings, the jurisdiction

of the Surrogate's Court and the validity of pre-death gifts. In addition, he has been appointed as guardian ad litem to represent the interests of minor children in New York, Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk, Bronx and Kings County Surrogate's Court contested probate, advice and direction, and accounting proceedings.

Mr. Freidman has lectured on Mediation and Surrogate's Court matters before the American Law Institute (Representing Estate and Trust Beneficiaries and Fiduciaries 2018); New York State Bar Association (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th & 17th Annual Sophisticated Trusts and Estates Law Institutes – 2007 to 2019; The Anatomy of an Estate – October 2006; Program Co-Chair; Estate Litigation – December 2002; Sleepless in Boston: Administering the Problem Estate – October 2002, Program Co-Chair; Representing the Fiduciary: The Problems and the Remedies – September 2000; Settling Litigation in the Surrogate's Court – January 1999, Program Co-Chair; Surrogate's Court Proceedings – Spring 2000; Administration of Decedent's Estates and Related Surrogate's Court Proceedings – Spring 1995); the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (Estate Planning That's Not Code-Dependent – June 2007; Estate Litigation for Beginners – March, 1999), the Surrogate's Association of the State of New York, the Elder Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants, the American Bankers Association (Advanced Trust Forum – Summer

2009) and the Richmond and Suffolk County Bar Associations. In addition, he has lectured on Surrogate's Court and litigation matters at Cardozo Law School and the New School for Social Research.

Mr. Freidman has authored, among other articles, Relief Against a Fiduciary: SCPA 2102 Proceedings, NYSBA Trusts and Estates Law Section Newsletter (Winter 2000, Vol. 33, No.4), Estate Planning in the Face of Divorce: An Ounce of Prevention ..., New York State Bar Journal (June 2005) and co-authored Estates with Multiple Fiduciaries Pose Ethical and Practical Issues for Attorneys and Clients Alike, New York State Bar Journal (November/December/2001); Early Detection of Possible Pitfalls in Fiduciary Obligations Can Prevent Later Problems, New York State Bar Journal (January 2002); Assuring the Case You Thought Was Settled, Stays Settled, New York Law Journal, February 21, 2007, p. 3, col. 1; and Trust Contests — The Developing Law, New York Law Journal, April 18, 2007, p. 3, col. 1.

Mr. Freidman is a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, a member of the American Bar Association (Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section), the New York State Bar Association (Former Chair, Trusts and Estates Law Section; Former Chair, Estate Litigation and Legislation Committees), the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (Committee on Trusts, Estates and Surrogate's Courts) and the Westchester County Bar Association.



# 2020 Covid-19 Pro Bono Surrogate's Court Initiative Award

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## **Erica Gómez, Esq.**

Erica Gómez, Esq. is a court attorney at the New York County Surrogate's Court, where she directs the Help Center for self-represented litigants. The primary goals of the Help Center are to provide patrons with legal and procedural information, and to assist them with the completion of paperwork in certain Surrogate's Court proceedings. Prior to this, Ms. Gómez was first a Staff Attorney and then General Counsel for The Family Center, a non-profit organization helping vulnerable New York City residents. During her time there, she litigated mainly in the areas of family,

matrimonial, and landlord-tenant law but was also able to expand the organization's Article 17A and Estate Planning practice. Ms. Gómez received her B.A. from Fordham University and her J.D. from the Fordham University School of Law. She is licensed to practice in New York, New Jersey, and in the District of Columbia. As a member of the New York City Bar Association, she currently serves on the Association's Legal Referral Service Committee. She is also a frequent speaker at events for law students and recent law graduates.

# Law Firm Honorees

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The logo for Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, featuring the word "Skadden" in a white serif font on a red rectangular background.

## Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and affiliates strongly encourages its lawyers, summer associates, and professional staff to work on pro bono matters for individuals and groups that are unable to afford legal services. The firm is a charter signatory to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge, whereby Skadden pledges that attorneys and summer associates from its domestic offices will dedicate time equivalent to at least 3% of their annual billable hours to work on pro bono matters.

In the first 11 months of 2020, attorneys and summer associates from Skadden's domestic offices dedicated to pro bono 9.7% of time billed. Firmwide, Skadden attorneys, summer associates, and professional staff recorded 236,927.16 hours of pro bono work from December 1, 2019, through November 30, 2020.

Deeply ingrained in the firm's culture, pro bono work provides vital help to a wide variety of individuals and organizations in need of legal assistance. Skadden attorneys regularly assist those seeking asylum in the United States and elsewhere in their attempts to escape persecution due to religious or political beliefs or sexual orientation. Attorneys handle many cases for death row inmates; take on numerous matters involving wrongful imprisonment and prosecution, housing disputes, veterans matters, family law and micro-entrepreneurs. Attorneys frequently provide legal assistance to legal services organizations and other nonprofits on a wide variety of issues including corporate governance, intellectual property, real estate, employment and potential and actual mergers.

The logo for Paul, Weiss, featuring the words "Paul" and "Weiss" in a bold, sans-serif font, separated by a vertical line.

## Paul Weiss

Paul, Weiss is committed to providing impactful pro bono legal assistance to individuals and organizations in need. Our program is all-encompassing, spanning the core issues facing our society.

In naming it "Law Firm of the Year" in 2019, *The American Lawyer* called out Paul, Weiss's remarkable pro bono commitment, noting that it is "all-encompassing, spanning all of the core issues currently facing our society."

Throughout our firm's history, we have maintained an unwavering commitment to providing pro bono legal assistance to the most vulnerable members of our society and in support of the public interest. This commitment is a part of the firm's identity, and is embraced by every member of the Paul, Weiss community, from the most senior leaders across all departments to the summer associates who join us each year.

From helping Thurgood Marshall reverse the doctrine of "separate but equal" in *Brown v. Board of Education* to representing Edith Windsor in challenging the Defense of Marriage Act in *United States v. Windsor*, our attorneys have achieved landmark victories in civil rights cases that have changed society for the better. Paul, Weiss lawyers participate in all levels of pro bono work, working directly with individual clients, non-profits and small businesses in a wide range of substantive areas, as well as handling appeals and drafting key amicus briefs before the Supreme Court.

# KIRKLAND & ELLIS

## **Kirkland & Ellis LLP**

Kirkland & Ellis LLP is committed to providing legal services without charge to those who cannot afford counsel, with the goals of improving lives, bettering communities, and deepening our professional experience. We are united as a firm in our efforts to make a meaningful difference in many critical areas, including civil and human rights, criminal appeals, disability rights, anti-discrimination, immigration, nonprofit governance, support for small businesses, education access and rights, and veterans' benefits, among others — with the common goal of serving the communities in which we live and work. Through pro bono work, almost all our lawyers at every level of the firm in all practice areas make their skills and talents available to those who cannot afford legal representation. We provide pro bono clients with the same commitment and diligence we show for our paying clients. Drawing from our diversity of backgrounds, strengths, and experiences, we pursue these projects with enthusiasm, to foster a more equitable and inclusive world.

# COPPS DiPAOLA SILVERMAN, PLLC

## **Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC**

The mission of Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC is to provide skilled advocacy and knowledge to our clients in the cutting-edge areas of Family Law, Adoption, Surrogacy, Assisted Reproduction Technology, Estate Planning & Probate and Guardianship. We bring those very same principals to our community, through pro bono advocacy for the underserved populations throughout the Capital District of New York. This year has been a year to remember for pro bono service. When the pandemic struck and our community was most in need, our entire office stepped up. We knew the litigants most in need of legal assistance were having great difficulty accessing attorneys for legal advice and they were not understanding how to access the courts during the pandemic. With this in mind, Partner Lorraine R. Silverman, Chair of the Albany County Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee, enlisted our firm to help. We partnered with the Albany County Bar Association, Albany County Family Court, and our 3rd JD Law Librarians to ensure the Help Center remained open, we brought the Albany County Family Court Help Center temporarily in-house to our firm and created a virtual Help Center, we recruited volunteers from the Albany County Bar Association Membership, set up a calendar and immediately began providing free virtual legal consultation appointments to family court litigants in need of assistance. Our paralegal manages the Help Center calendar today and all our attorneys, along with a number of ACBA member volunteers, continue to volunteer their time to staff the virtual Help Center. In addition to the Help Center work, this year like every other, our Attorneys have provided countless hours of direct pro bono services to helping survivors of domestic violence secure civil orders of protection, divorce their abusers, obtain custody of their children, and to secure child and spousal support, which all helped further their safety and independence. We care. We are committed to ensuring justice for all.

# BARCLAY DAMON <sup>LLP</sup>

## Barclay Damon LLP

Through our innovative, award-winning pro bono program, all our full-time attorneys provide free legal assistance to low-income individuals and organizations that assist them, helping to navigate issues related to immigration, housing, women's rights, prisoners' rights, community building, and economic development, among others.

In the last three years, Barclay Damon achieved 100-percent participation in its pro bono program among fulltime attorneys in each of the firm's offices. This past year, attorneys completed over 3,500 hours of pro bono service valued at nearly \$1 million.

Representative pro bono activities include the following examples:

- The American Bar Association's Free Legal Answers virtual legal advice clinic, which allows qualified users to post civil legal questions through their state bar website.
- The NYS Appellate Division Pro Bono Appeals Program, which involves preparing and filing appeals of criminal convictions
- The Volunteer Lawyers Project Attorney of the Morning Program, which offers legal representation to low-income individuals facing eviction.
- The Say Yes to Education program, including staffing a clinic at the district's Adult Literacy Center
- The Volunteer Legal Services Project Attorney Hot Line Program, which involves providing legal advice and counsel to low-income individuals with consumer-law related issues, including deed transfers, frozen bank accounts, name changes, probate, and tax and IRS issues



## Phillips Lytle LLP

### Phillips Lytle LLP

Pro bono work has been an important commitment for Phillips Lytle throughout its 185+ history. Across all our eight offices (six of which are in New York State), our more than 190 attorneys are dedicated to providing legal services to the poor, the disadvantaged and those in need. The legal services the firm provides also benefit organizations and institutions that assist the indigent and contribute to the quality of life in our communities. This work includes civil and criminal matters, and non-litigation legal assistance, ranging from matters that broadly impact communities, to representation of those in need in high-volume court settings, to complex individual case representations. As the firm plans for the future, pro bono services remain one of its core values.



# EMPIRE STATE COUNSEL®

## 2020 HONOREES

**Pro Bono changes lives. The Empire State Counsel® Program recognizes our members' pro bono contributions. By donating their time and expertise our members help low-income and vulnerable persons, who otherwise could not afford an attorney, gain access to the civil justice system. Since the program launched in 2006, our members have donated almost 1.6 million pro bono hours. The program also recognizes the law firms that support and encourage pro bono. Congratulations to the 2020 Empire State Counsel® honorees and their law firms.**

### **Alston & Bird, LLP**

Michelle Bart, Esq.  
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Yoana Setzer, Esq.  
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Katie Sullivan, Esq.  
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Yonatan Tammam, Esq.  
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Adam Busch, Esq.  
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Arielle Warshall Katz, Esq.  
Mariya Khvatskaya, Esq.  
Daniel M. Lennard, Esq.  
Jason M. Moff, Esq.  
Gary P. Naftalis, Esq.  
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