

NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Pro Bono News

2023 Empire State Counsel® Spotlight Edition



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2022 Empire State Counsel® Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers and Law Firm Honorees

Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

Anne F. Downey, Esq.
Partner, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP
Wesley R. Powell, Esq.
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

Law Firm Honorees

Barclay Damon LLP
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP
Phillips Lytle LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

Special thank you to the committee co-chairs for selecting this year's award winners.

Committee on Legal Aid

Gretchen Gonzalez, Esq., *CEO/Executive Director Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.*
Abja Midha, Esq., *Executive Director at Volunteers of Legal Service*

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Richard C. Lewis, Esq., *New York State Bar Association President-Elect, and Special Counsel, Hinman, Howard & Katell.*

Rezwanul Islam, Esq., *Deputy Executive Director, Nassau Suffolk Law Services*

Lynn Poster-Zimmerman, Esq., *Lynn Poster-Zimmerman, PC*

Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers



Anne F. Downey, Esq.

Anne F. Downey is a partner at Harter Secrest & Emery LLP (HSE). Committed to helping her clients succeed, Anne delivers thoughtful and practical legal advice. With more than 30 years of experience, including time as a small business owner, Anne helps businesses and individuals develop, protect, and utilize intellectual property rights. She advises clients on the domestic and international protection of trademarks and copyrights and has significant experience managing global IP portfolios. She also negotiates license agreements, handles trade secrets and e-commerce issues, as well as IP infringement, opposition, and cancellation matters.

Anne represents large multi-national companies to sole proprietors, including a wide range of business and not-for-profit organizations. Regardless of her client's size or scope, Anne is passionate about serving her client's immediate and long-term needs in a timely, personable, and strategic manner.

In addition to her IP practice, Anne assists not-for-profit organizations with incorporating and obtaining 501(c)(3) status, counsels' entities and individuals

on business and operational issues, and drafts and negotiates a wide variety of agreements.

Anne has long committed a portion of her practice to giving back to the community by engaging in pro bono cases. She currently leads HSE's engagement in pro bono asylum cases. As the lead partner on these matters, Anne created an administrative system to streamline the onboarding process and case management, coordinates opportunities with local assigning agencies, takes cases herself, and assigns others to nine different HSE teams consisting of three or four attorneys.

She is a former Chair of the Erie County Bar Association Intellectual Property Law Committee, and a former adjunct professor at Hilbert College.

She has been named as Best Lawyers® 2023 Nonprofit/Charities Law "Lawyer of the Year" in Buffalo New York, selected for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America® for Nonprofit/Charities Law, and is a Legal Elite of Western New York honoree by Buffalo Business First.

Anne earned a J.D. from O.W. Coburn School of Law at Oral Roberts University and a B.A. from the University of California at San Diego.

Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers



Wesley R. Powell, Esq.

Wesley R. Powell is a partner in the Litigation Department of Willkie Farr & Gallagher, LLP, where he is also a member of the Antitrust and Competition Practice Group and Co-Chair of the Pro Bono Practice Group. His active litigation practice focuses on civil litigation with a particular emphasis on antitrust litigation and counseling and disputes arising out of merger and acquisition agreements. He also has represented clients in corporate governance, employment, First Amendment, restructuring, securities, and other general commercial litigation matters.

He has an almost 30-year year history of fighting for civil rights and justice for the underprivileged. He leads pro bono efforts on a broad range of groundbreaking civil rights matters that advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, low-income New Yorkers, asylum seekers and others. With a longstanding commitment to social justice, Wes leads the firm in landmark cases that protect LGBTQ+ rights, with a particular focus on transgender rights with respect to healthcare coverage of gender-affirming care, access to restrooms, asylum, among other matters. He's a member of Willkie's DEI Committee and partner liaison to the

LGBTQ+ affinity group. His commitment to pro bono service has set an example for generations of attorneys and had an immeasurable impact – on the lives of those in need and on the broader legal landscape.

In recognition of his pro bono work, Wes has been honored by leading organizations including Legal Aid's Society Pro Bono Publico Awards and NYSBA Empire State Counsel Program. In addition, Wes was named "LGBT+ Equality Lawyer of the Year" at the Chambers Diversity and Inclusion Awards: USA 2019, and he was named one of Crain's New York Business Notable 2022 LGBTQ Leaders. In addition to his pro bono work, Wes serves on the board of the New York City AIDS Memorial and previously served for nine years on the board (including three years as Chair) of the Hetrick-Martin Institute, the nation's leading provider of services to at-risk LGBTQ+ youth, and he received the LGBT Focus Foundation's Leadership Award for his service to HMI. He is a past Chair of the Antitrust Section of the NYSBA and the Partners Group of the LGBT Bar Association of New York.

Law Firm Honorees

The logo for Barclay Damon LLP is displayed within a blue rectangular box. The text "BARCLAY" is in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below it, "DAMON" is in the same font, followed by "LLP" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

Barclay Damon has a proud history of giving back to the communities we serve, with an emphasis on using our skills, time, and ingenuity to narrow the gap between those in need who seek legal assistance and access to justice. Our commitment to pro bono work runs deep and is a critical part of the firm's core culture.

For the last several years, every one of the law firm's full-time attorneys has provided pro bono legal services to low-income individuals in the communities we serve. In the last completed year, the firm dedicated more than 2,000 hours of time valued at nearly \$700,000 to pro bono efforts, with attorneys actively participating in firm-sponsored family court clinics, litigating civil rights violations, drafting wills for veterans, assisting with clemency applications, and providing online legal aid through initiatives such as the American Bar Association's Free Legal Answers program. The firm's investment in communities across its office platform supported legal matters involving many of today's critical issues, including immigration, housing, women's rights, prisoners' rights, community building, and economic development, among others.

As a firm that has been in existence since 1855, a strong commitment to pro bono service has been a priority for Barclay Damon at every stage of the firm's development. Now a leading law firm with offices across the Northeastern United States and in Toronto, the firm has more reason than ever to give generously of our time, talent, and passion for pro bono service.

We are honored that our work is frequently recognized by our peers at organizations across the state, and we extend our great thanks to the New York State Bar Association for today's honors—both for our attorneys and for the many other attorneys at firms throughout the state who dedicate themselves to helping the most needy among us find justice.

Paul | Weiss

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.

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.



Phillips Lytle LLP

Phillips Lytle LLP

Pro bono work has been an important commitment for Phillips Lytle throughout its 185+ history. Across all nine offices (six of which are in New York State), our nearly 180 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.



Skadden

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 2022, attorneys from Skadden's domestic offices dedicated to pro bono 7.1% of time billed. Firmwide, Skadden personnel recorded more than 180,000 hours of pro bono work from December 1, 2021, through November 15, 2022.

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.

WILLKIE

WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER_{LLP}

Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

Willkie is an elite international law firm of approximately 1,200 lawyers located in 13 offices in six countries. Among the hallmarks of our core values and culture is our long-standing commitment to serving the underprivileged, promoting social justice, and supporting the communities in which we live and work. Through the Firm's Pro Bono Committee, we offer attorneys many opportunities to provide pro bono legal advice and support to underserved individuals, communities, and organizations. In 2021, Willkie attorneys worked on more than 500 pro bono matters with over 180 new pro bono matters opened in 2021 alone.

Willkie provides pro bono legal advice and support across a range of areas, including environmental, family law, immigration, incarcerated individuals, LGBTQ+, racial justice, reproductive rights, veterans' assistance and voting rights. As part of Willkie's continued effort to devote significant pro bono resources to address systemic issues affecting marginalized communities, the firm has partnered with several organizations dedicated to legal support and advocacy.

There are millions of reasons to **do Pro Bono.**

Do The Public Good

The New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) has a long and proud tradition of advocating for equal access to justice for all New Yorkers in civil matters through a combination of government-funded legal services programs and voluntary pro bono service by private practitioners. The Department of Public Interest provides educational training programs for attorneys employed by legal services organizations and oversees a number of attorney recognition programs that promote, recognize, and honor pro bono service by individual attorneys and law firms through award programs.

Call the New York State Bar Association today at

518-487-5641 or go to
www.nysba.org/probono

to learn about pro bono opportunities.





EMPIRE STATE COUNSEL®

2022 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.

The program also recognizes the law firms that support and encourage pro bono. Congratulations to the 2022 Empire State Counsel® honorees and their law firms.

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Mary Mahoney, Esq.
Jill Miller, Esq.
Gia M. Velasquez, Esq.

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