

GROOM  
LAW GROUP

# PRO BONO

ANNUAL UPDATE • 2023



GROOM LAW GROUP, CHARTERED

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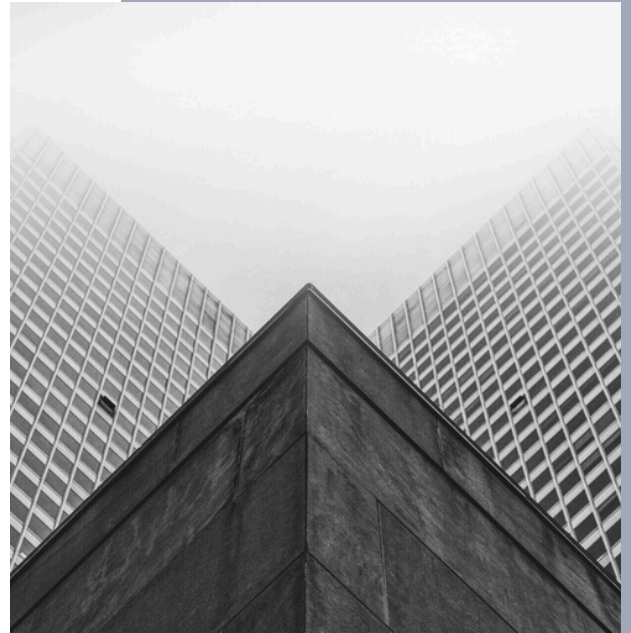
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# OUR COMMITMENT

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Our dedication to pro bono services is more than a professional responsibility, it's a commitment to our community. At Groom, every client — pro bono or otherwise — receives the same exceptional level of service, care, and attention.



## MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

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Delivering public service goes hand-in-hand with Groom's nearly 50 year history of offering best-in-class employee benefits, health, and retirement legal services. Toward that end, it is no surprise that our unwavering commitment to invest in our community provides those who need it most accessibility to fundamental legal support.

We are fortunate to connect with and make meaningful strides on behalf of our pro bono clients to support and uplift them not only when they are experiencing a crisis but also when they are simply trying to take the next important step in life. . We see their struggles, taking them on as our own, and remain resolute in our commitment to helping to eliminate some level of uncertainty in their lives.

In 2023, we continued down the path of standing alongside our pro bono clients, offering support through challenges such as child custody, asylum, tax, and veteran affairs. This report provides a window into the inspiring stories of our clients, showcasing the meaningful investments made by a large number of our attorneys and members of staff.

- Christine L. Keller, *Executive Principal*

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRO BONO CHAIR

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Groom attorneys consistently secure impactful outcomes for our clients, demonstrating our commitment to making a positive difference in both pro bono and non-pro bono cases. What sets Groom apart is our dedicated focus on community service, using our legal skills to promote access to justice. Pro bono work isn't a sideline here; it's a fundamental aspect of our firm identity.

At Groom, we stand with our pro bono clients, providing support in numerous legal areas ranging from child custody to housing to veteran affairs and so much more. We take up our clients' challenges, treating them as our own, and remain committed to reducing uncertainties in their lives.

I commend my colleagues for their exceptional efforts, with thousands of pro bono hours performed in 2023 alone. Our Pro Bono Annual Report provides insight into inspiring stories of clients, highlighting a few of the many matters in which we made meaningful contributions and mentioning some of the people here at the firm who made an impact in our community. Pro bono is fundamental to how we recruit and train our lawyers, and it's a key measure of our professional success.

- Edward J. Meehan, *Chair, Pro Bono Committee*

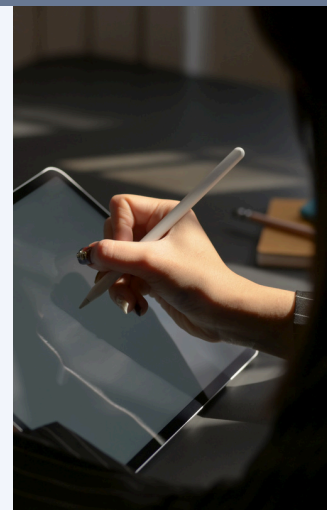




*The illustrative examples below highlight Groom’s dedication to pro bono initiatives in the Washington D.C. area. Our attorneys have positively impacted many lives, demonstrating their dedication to providing essential legal support for those in need.*

## “MAIP”

The Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project (“MAIP”) is a non-profit that works to overturn wrongful convictions for innocent people in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia. Every year, MAIP receives hundreds of requests to look into potential wrongful convictions but has limited resources. That’s where the volunteers at Groom come in. When MAIP sends over a case file, we assess available information, from transcripts to evidence, and recommend whether MAIP should devote its resources to prove a wrongful conviction. Groom has partnered with MAIP since 2018 on over 10 different cases. Associate [Jenna Russell](#) and senior paralegal Lindsey Stiles currently work on MAIP case reviews.



## BREM FOUNDATION

Principals [Rosie Zaklad](#) and [Kim Boberg](#) filed for, and obtained, a DC tax-exemption for the Brem Foundation to Defeat Breast Cancer (a Maryland nonprofit corporation), and registered the Foundation to solicit charitable contributions in DC. Because the Brem Foundation opened a DC office in 2023, we also began the process of seeking a DC sales tax exemption for the Brem Foundation. Summer associate Alexandra Walsh assisted with this research, and principal [Viv Turner](#) responded to various privacy questions under Federal and state law regarding the Brem Foundation's programs.


Groom also supported the Brem Foundation by sponsoring their annual fundraising event, Empower Hour. A group of Groom attorneys attended this event where they learned about early detection and equal access to high-quality screening.



## ASYLUM

Associate Randy Bunnell and staff attorney Natallia Maroz helped a Russian national successfully appeal an immigration judge's decision denying his application for asylum. The client entered the United States to seek asylum to escape persecution in Russia on account of his identity as bisexual and his political opinion opposing the Russian military operation in Ukraine. The client has received a conscription notice and fears he would be required to serve in the Russian military if forced to return to Russia. The Groom team prepared an appeal brief to the Board of Immigration Appeals, which agreed that the immigration judge failed to properly assess the client's asylum claim and remanded the case for a new hearing. The client is currently living and working in New Orleans, Louisiana and will have a new hearing on his asylum application in 2025.

## ELDER LAW



Groom has continued to support Legal Counsel for the Elderly ("LCE"), a nonprofit that provides free legal and social work services to over 6,000 Washington, D.C. elders each year. Associate Randy Bunnell is a member of the Young Lawyers Alliance advisory body of LCE and coordinates ways for Groom to work with LCE. For example, Randy and principal Jeffrey Kroh, with summer associates Hanna Santanam and Jaylon Denkins, prepared a detailed legal memo and a self-help guide for LCE to use in advising seniors facing condemnation of their homes by the D.C. Board for the Condemnation of Insanitary Buildings.

## SUMMER FUNDRAISING

Groom continued its traditional summer fundraising for nonprofit organizations that make a difference in our community and beyond. Led by associate Kalena Kettering and senior counsel Arsalan Malik, the 2023 campaign successfully raised over \$78,000 in funds donated by the firm and Groom personnel to five select organizations: LegalAid's Making Justice Real Campaign, AsylumWorks' Rebuilding Lives Campaign, The Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Equal Justice Initiative, and Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center.



“It is such a good feeling to know that all the work and effort we put in during one day of a Schedule H clinic will impact the life of a DC senior for years to come.”

– Nuvia Gomez  
(Executive Assistant,  
Pro Bono Committee Member)

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS/PRIVACY

Groom is defending a client in multiple federal courts in suits filed by her ex-husband after divorce and custody proceedings in state court. Senior counsel Ross McSweeney was appointed by Judge Tanya Chutkan in the District Court for the District of Columbia to defend the client against a complaint alleging property damage to the parties' former home and invasion of his privacy through accessing records of their joint phone account. With that matter in discovery and amid multiple successful motions to strike and seal the ex-husband's salacious, gratuitous allegations about Groom's client's moral character, the Groom team – which also includes senior counsel Paul Rinefierd, associate Rosemary Loehr and senior paralegal Lindsey Stiles – represented the client in the District of Maryland, where the ex-husband alleged that she conspired with their child's school district to deprive the ex-husband of his custody rights. Groom prevailed on a motion to dismiss the District of Maryland case, which dismissal was affirmed on appeal by the Fourth Circuit. The case has been dismissed in the District of Columbia.

## SCHEDULE H

On March 14, 2023, Groom Law Group and Willis Towers Watson collaborated to staff a joint Schedule H clinic hosted at Groom Law offices. Executive assistant Nuvia Gomez Group provided administrative support with planning the clinic. Associates Larry Blocho, David Block, and Katelyn Davis, of counsels David Ashner and Scott Mayland, and principals Jenny Eller and Jason Lee, along with attorneys from Willis Towers Watson participated in the joint clinic. Schedule H is a D.C. income tax credit available to homeowners and renters who spend a disproportionately high portion of their income on housing costs. For many seniors in the District, the credit is essential to pay for necessities, such as food, clothing, utility bills, medical expenses, and even the next year's housing costs.





## Pro Bono Awards

Groom Law Group was presented with an award by AsylumWorks for their efforts to help reduce the organization's client waitlist and enroll more people into their critical services. This contribution made a huge difference for individuals and families seeking to rebuild their lives with dignity in the Washington DC metro area.

The recognition by AsylumWorks is merely the latest award from public interest organizations in Groom's DC area community. In recent years, the firm received the Making Justice Real Pro Bono Award from the Legal Aid Society of Washington DC in 2019, which recognized outstanding pro bono services in the Washington, D.C. community. Groom was also honored at an Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center ("APALRC") annual dinner for pro bono work completed by principals Sarah Adams and Ed Meehan and senior paralegal Lindsey Stiles .

“Something that we often discuss in staff meetings is how to spark joy and hope for our community amidst all the ups and downs of these uncertain times, especially in the immigration space. But partners like Groom Law Group, Chartered remind us of the tremendous impact a group of dedicated people can make.”

- AsylumWorks





## CAPITAL PRO BONO HONOR ROLL

The DC Courts, in partnership with the D.C. Access to Justice Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center, named 12 Groom attorneys to the 2023 Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll, a tremendous honor reserved for attorneys who contributed 50 or more hours of pro bono work within the year to those without the resources to afford legal counsel. Beyond 50 hours, a commitment of 100 or more hours earns “High Honors”, of which 7 Groom attorneys achieved.

Read the Chief Judges of the DC Courts letter to recipients:

- [Open Letter to the 2023 Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll Registrants From Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby and Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring](#)

Groom Recipients Were (High Honors recipients noted with an asterisk):

- |                  |                     |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| • David Block*   | • Kalena Kettering* | • Edward Meehan*    |
| • Randy Bunnell* | • Rosemary Loehr    | • Viv Hunter Turner |
| • Jim Cole       | • Louis Mazawey*    | • Kevin Walsh       |
| • Nehama Hanoch* | • Ross McSweeney*   | • Rosie Zaklad      |

## GROOM'S PRO BONO LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each year Groom's Chair of Pro Bono awards a select group of firm members the Pro Bono Leadership Award. This award recognizes individuals that have demonstrated a distinguished level of dedication to pro bono matters, taken the initiative to identify cases for the firm to partner on, produced noteworthy results, and, importantly, for inspiring others. 2022 recipients were recognized at an awards dinner and reception in spring 2023. This year's recipients will be similarly recognized in summer 2024. 2023 awardees were:

- David Block, *Associate* •
- Randy Bunnell, *Associate* •
- Kalena Kettering, *Associate* •
- Louis Mazawey, *Principal* •

Previous recipients include:

- Kim Boberg, *Senior Counsel* (2020) •
- Kelly Geloneck, *Principal* (2020) •
- Nuvia Gomez, *Executive Assistant* (2022) •
- Chris Keller, *Executive Principal* (2019) •
- Ross McSweeney, *Senior Counsel* (2021) •
- Mark Nielsen, *Principal* (2022) •
- Lindsey Stiles, *Senior Paralegal* (2021) •
- Rosie Zaklad, *Principal* (2022) •

# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Ed Meehan  
Principal, Chair



Randy Bunnell  
Associate  
Liaison to LCE



Nuvia Gomez  
Executive Assistant



Kalena Kettering  
Associate  
Liaison to APALRC



Arsalan Malik  
Senior Counsel  
Liaison to AsylumWorks



Ross McSweeney  
Senior Counsel  
Liaison to DC Legal Aid

\*\*Prior committee members who helped guide pro bono matters are Elizabeth LaPaugh, Paul Rinefierd, and Kara Wheatley.

To learn more about Groom's pro bono program, please contact:

Ed Meehan, Pro Bono Chair, (202) 861-2602, [emeehan@groom.com](mailto:emeehan@groom.com)

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