

GROOM
LAW GROUP

PRO BONO

ANNUAL UPDATE • 2022



GROOM LAW GROUP, CHARTERED

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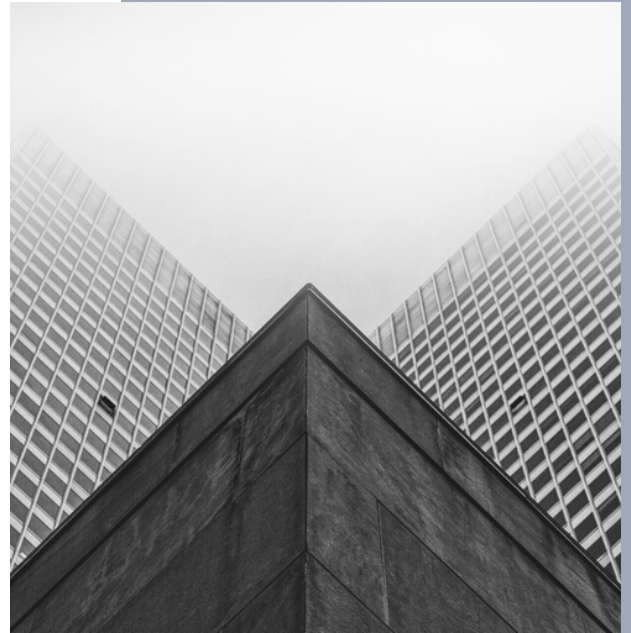
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OUR COMMITMENT

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



Groom attorneys have achieved many significant victories on behalf of our clients – pro bono and non-pro bono – both inside the courtroom and out. What makes Groom stand out is its unwavering commitment to serving the community. Putting our everyday legal skills to work to elevate the voices of others and to expand equal access to justice for all is of paramount importance to us. We view pro bono as a fundamental component of our firm and a cornerstone of our culture.

THAT IS WHY WE STAND SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER WITH OUR PRO BONO CLIENTS AS THEY CONTEND WITH UNCERTAINTY, WHETHER IN THE FORM OF CHILD CUSTODY, ASYLUM, TAX, OR VETERAN MATTERS. THEIR STRUGGLES ARE OUR STRUGGLES.

This year, I am truly grateful and appreciative of the work and level of effort that my colleagues have dedicated to providing pro bono services, with nearly half of our attorneys actively engaging in pro bono matters. Throughout our 2022 Pro Bono Annual Report we provide you with a glimpse of our incredible clients' stories that we have been fortunate to be a part of.

– Christine L. Keller, *Executive Principal*

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRO BONO CHAIR

Pro bono is more than giving back – we benefit too. Though helpful to our clients and community, the effect on Groom’s attorneys and staff is as equally valuable. Training and professional development, team problem solving and collegiality, and a deepened connection to others are all dividends of our pro bono work.

OVER THE PAST YEAR, I HAVE SEEN COLLEAGUES REJOICE IN THEIR PRO BONO CLIENTS’ SUCCESSES AS IF THEY WERE THEIR OWN IN AN ASSORTMENT OF CASES THAT SPAN BEYOND GROOM’S BENEFITS, HEALTH, AND RETIREMENT FOCUS.

Collectively, we amplify the voices of parents, children, veterans, unhoused, refugees and others in need who wouldn’t otherwise have anywhere to turn for help in the legal system. By our pro bono work, we impact individual lives and aim to achieve broader impacts by taking a hard look at some of the practices and laws that affect so many of the individuals that we serve.

Throughout this update, we share some of our efforts. Thank you for taking time to read about our pro bono work in the past year.

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

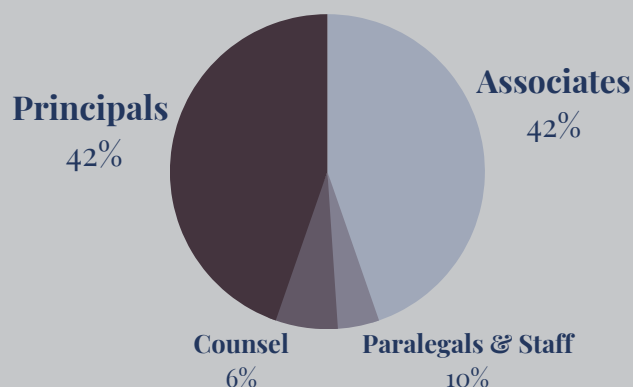


2022 AT-A-GLANCE

Leadership Participation

30% of firm leaders participated in pro bono matters

Pro Bono Hours



Attorneys earn credit toward their billable hours goal for pro bono work

Overall Participation

44% of Groom attorneys participated in pro bono matters

Launched successful fundraising campaign that generated over \$80,000 in funds for five select organizations:

LegalAid

AsylumWorks

Equal Justice Initiative

Legal Counsel for the Elderly

Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center

Named #22 in *Vault's* "Top 150 Under 150" list for "Best Midsize Law Firms for Pro Bono"

ASYLUM

Zack Hoffmann-Richards and Mark Lofgren helped a Haitian national held in solitary confinement in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center obtain parole for urgent humanitarian reasons. The client entered the United States by crossing the Rio Grande near Ciudad Acuña, Mexico to seek asylum to escape persecution in her home country for her status as a perceived homosexual and as a transgender woman. While in ICE's custody, she was held in isolation and was refused access to hormone therapy she had been receiving before coming to the United States. The Groom team prepared a successful submission with documentation of the harm she was experiencing in custody and her trustworthiness, and secured her release to live with family in Florida while her asylum application is being processed.



CHILD CUSTODY

Andrew Salek-Raham and Lindsey Stiles helped a father in a custody dispute involving two children at the center of cases filed by their parents in three different courts potentially having jurisdiction given the children's and parents' shifting residences at different times: the District of Columbia, Maryland and Ohio. The DC court held a half-day trial on jurisdiction, which Groom handled along with the case in Maryland, and coordinated with the father's Ohio counsel on proceedings there. Groom assisted with obtaining a settlement agreement resolving all pending custody cases, which was filed and approved.

TAX ADVICE

David Block, Liz Dold and Kelly Geloneck teamed up to assist a local Reverend with correcting an error made by the IRS on his family's tax return. The Groom team was able to persuade the IRS to remove nearly \$13,000 in incorrect taxes, penalties, and interest on the family's account, and avoid a levy being placed on their property.



CHILD CUSTODY

Kalena Kettering and Arsalan Malik helped a mother defending a child custody complaint filed by the father of their three children. The case involved allegations of domestic violence against the father. Groom negotiated a custody agreement, which the court approved following a hearing and used as the basis for a permanent custody order.

“The rules governing compensation arrangements at tax-exempt employers are surprisingly complex. Unfortunately, tax-exempt employers often do not have the resources to hire expert counsel to structure their arrangements appropriately. I was thrilled to assist a local non-profit with designing a plan to reward one of its leaders for his hard work and dedication to the group's important cause.”

- Will Fogleman, Groom Principal

CHILD CUSTODY

Ross McSweeney, Paul Rinefierd and Lindsey Stiles are helping a woman defend against protracted litigation brought by her ex-husband in DC and Maryland federal and state courts. The ex-husband alleged in Maryland court that she violated a custody order by conspiring with

Prince George's County school officials to violate his liberty interests under the 14th Amendment by refusing to release the parties' child to him after school rather than after certain activities. Groom filed a successful motion to dismiss, which was affirmed by the Fourth Circuit. The

Groom team also prevailed on a motion to strike gratuitous salacious allegations the ex-husband made about the client in his pleadings. Meanwhile, the ex-husband sued the client in DC federal Court, along with congregants at a Nigerian Catholic Church and a telephone services carrier, alleging that all parties conspired to violate his privacy by illegally accessing his cell phone records, among other complaints. After lengthy motion practice, resulting in the dismissal of the invasion of privacy claims, the court ordered the ex-husband to show cause why the remainder of the case should not be dismissed. The matter is awaiting court ruling.



“She saw my case for what it was and she fought for me.”

- Pro Bono Client

“Pro bono has been the most challenging and rewarding aspect of my career at Groom. The training opportunities associated have been professionally invaluable. However, the biggest surprise in pro bono has been the personal fulfillment I have gained in watching the tangible impact on my clients' lives.”

- Kalena Kettering, Groom Associate



CHILD CUSTODY

In partnership with Legal Aid DC, Groom litigation attorneys Kalena Kettering and Mark Nielsen served as lead attorneys on behalf of their client who was embroiled in an arduous custody dispute with her young daughter's father.

In their feature, Legal Aid DC described Groom as having “successfully turned the tide of the litigation by expertly illustrating to the Court that Ms. Page provided her daughter with a stable and loving home.”

TAX ADVICE

Groom attorneys Rosie Zaklad, Victoria Allen, and Kim Boberg represented a DC public school Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), a tax-exempt organization that was put on the IRS Automatic Revocation of Exemption list, resulting in a revocation of the PTA's tax-exempt status. Groom lawyers convinced the IRS that the revocation was erroneous, and obtained reinstatement of the PTA's tax-exempt status, allowing the PTA to continue to accept tax-deductible donations which fund important classroom support and resources, just in time for their keystone fundraiser.



RESEARCH ADVOCACY

Lou Mazawey continued to support efforts to secure Congressional funding of neurological research. He met with House and Senate staffs and helped draft position papers. The Foundation successfully renewed eligibility of peripheral neuropathy for grants under the Department of Defense "Consumer Directed Medical Research Program" for FY 2023.

LEGAL ADVOCACY

Christy Tinnes continued her long-time work with the ABA Cancer Advocacy Interest Group. This is a Health Law Section project on legal rights of cancer patients and their families with a focus on training attorneys to assist with legal advice and advocacy concerning diagnosis and treatment.

In 2022, Christy helped spearhead the ERISA/ACA/HIPAA update to the Legal Advocacy Guide.



Pro bono is important to me because if we have the capability to help those around us, why wouldn't we? You simply never know what others are going through and how much of a positive impact you can have, simply by donating your time. All of these cases matter to someone – whether it's a case where we are fighting to get proper custody agreements in place for a family, a case where we are helping someone apply for asylum and safety in this country, or reviewing case files for the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project – I'm so appreciative to be able to contribute to this kind of work.

- *Lindsey Stiles, Groom Senior Managing Litigation Paralegal*



VETERAN'S BENEFITS

14 Groom attorneys attended a virtual one-day training hosted by the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program. The Veterans Consortium supports pro bono attorneys in representing veterans before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. The training included remarks from the Hon. Margaret Bartley, Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, as well as overviews of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the veterans' benefits claim process, and an in-depth presentation on issue-spotting in veterans' benefit appeals. Groom attorneys are now pursuing veterans' benefits cases.





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 14 Groom attorneys to the 2021 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 9 Groom attorneys achieved.

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

- [Open Letter to the 2021 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):

- Sarah Adams
- Jim Cole
- Shaun Gates*
- Kalena Kettering*
- Katherine Kohn*
- Samuel Levin
- Louis Mazawey*
- Ross McSweeney*
- Edward Meehan*
- Mark Nielsen*
- David Powell
- Andrew Salek-Raham*
- Kara Wheatley
- Elizabeth Woods*

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 awardees were:

- Nuvia Gomez, *Executive Assistant* •
- Mark Nielsen, *Principal* •
- Rosie Zaklad, *Principal* •

COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Ed Meehan
Principal, Chair



Randy Bunnell
Associate



Nuvia Gomez
Executive Assistant



Katie Kohn
Senior Counsel



Ross McSweeney
Senior Counsel

**Prior committee members who helped guide pro bono matters are 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

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