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Robinson & Cole Lawyers Provide Pro Bono Support to Norwich Soup Kitchen

Robinson & Cole lawyers [Timothy D. Bates](#), [Brian R. Smith](#), [Nuala E. Droney](#), [Evan J. Seeman](#), [Kathleen E. Dion](#), and [Jonathan H. Schaefer](#), along with land use analyst [Linnea C. McCaffrey](#), are collaborating to provide pro bono assistance to St. Vincent de Paul Place, Norwich, Inc., in Connecticut, a ministry of the Roman Catholic Diocese that provides services to the needy in Norwich through its soup kitchen and food pantry programs. The firm has performed this work on a modified pro bono basis; however, it is requesting that attorneys' fees be awarded should it be successful.

The firm's representation of St. Vincent concerns its ability to exercise freely its religion to serve the needy on a particular site. The firm has brought an appeal regarding the denial of a special permit to the Second Circuit, is challenging an enforcement order in the U.S. District Court, and, based on the denial of a variance on May 14, 2013, is preparing another lawsuit to be filed in the District Court. The cases challenge the City of Norwich's actions under the First Amendment and the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). An overwhelming number of cases in Connecticut's low-income bracket are not being represented in court, bringing to light a very real concern about this impact on justice. Robinson & Cole is part of a pro bono movement to represent those who do not have access to justice. These cases, which started at the local level with planning and zoning issues before moving into federal court, are presently Robinson & Cole's largest pro bono cases.

Brian Smith has been handling the variance application while Evan Seeman and Linnea McCaffrey have been providing the research support. Mr. Seeman also drafted the complaint in the lawsuit as well as in a related lawsuit and is helping to draft all of the pleadings. Tim Bates is handling the zoning request, and Nuala Droney assisted with the federal lawsuit in the district court. Kate Dion and Jon Schaefer are assisting with the Second Circuit appeal.

Tim Bates was quoted in the article "Soup kitchen in Norwich gets \$100,000 in donated legal help," published in the New London Day on April 23, 2013.

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