

**Robinson+Cole**

Pro Bono

At a Glance



December 2015

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### MESSAGE FROM PETER KNIGHT, PRO BONO PARTNER

The season of giving has arrived and with it the opportunity to reflect and be thankful. In November, the American Bar Association took a week to bring special attention to the heightened need for pro bono services and to celebrate lawyers and law firms that dedicate time and resources to pro bono work. We are fortunate to work at a firm that supports and encourages these efforts. Robinson+Cole has a proud history of serving some of the neediest members of our communities—and that's due to the efforts of our lawyers and staff, too numerous to name.



The firm continues to rack up successes and make significant contributions on behalf of our pro bono clients. Some of these warrant and receive well-deserved recognition by the organizations we support, including the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, the Pro Bono Partnership, and Lawyers for Children America, among others. I'm equally struck, however, by the number of our lawyers who handle large and small matters on behalf of causes and organizations they have a special relationship with, often without recognition.

Special thanks to all of you who have contributed your time to pro bono service this year. I would ask us all to consider taking on a new pro bono matter or getting involved with one of our pro bono partners in the year ahead. If you'd like some ideas or some suggestions on where to start, please get in touch with a member of the Pro Bono Committee.

While R+C attorneys have advanced a number of worthy causes through their pro bono efforts, in this

newsletter we pay special attention to the work that our lawyers have done to prevent domestic violence and to support women, children, and families caught in abusive situations.

### **ROBINSON+COLE HOSTS TRAINING ON REPRESENTING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

On November 2, Robinson+Cole hosted a groundbreaking training session for more than 35 lawyers interested in representing victims of domestic violence seeking restraining orders in Connecticut. The session, co-sponsored by the Connecticut Bar Association/Young Lawyers Section, encouraged lawyers at other firms to model their own pro bono programs after Robinson+Cole's Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) Program. It featured presentations by the Honorable Elizabeth A. Bozzuto of the Connecticut Superior Court, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Robinson+Cole attorneys. Attendees included lawyers from other large firms, in-house corporate counsel, and Judicial Branch Court Operations. Robinson+Cole participants included Amanda E. Gordon, Kelly Frye Barnett, Edward J. Heath, Eric D. Daniels, Jenna Veronneau, J. Tyler Butts, Jessica A. R. Hamilton, Andrew A. DePeau, Jonathan E. Small, Kathleen E. Dion, James R. Nault, Nuala E. Droney, Frank F. Coulom Jr., and Mary Ann Zup.

### **BUSINESS LITIGATION LAWYERS SUCCESSFULLY REPRESENT CLIENTS THROUGH DVRO PROGRAM**

Business litigation lawyers Nuala E. Droney, Amanda E. Gordon, and Kelly Frye Barnett were recently successful in representing a mother and her baby in a hearing to obtain a restraining order for both individuals. The representation was part of Robinson+Cole's DVRO Program. In recognition of the growing needs of unrepresented parties in the State of Connecticut's family court system, the goal of the DVRO Program is to assist unrepresented applicants seeking restraining orders against family or household violence. The program provides unrepresented parties not only the benefit of attorney advice but also assistance in navigating the court system.

### **ED HEATH CHALLENGES CONNECTICUT LAWYERS TO ADVOCATE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

In the wake of a recent tragedy in Middletown, Connecticut, involving the murder of a baby by his father, business litigation partner Edward J. Heath co-authored with Jamey Bell, executive director of Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA), the article "[A Call to Action: Connecticut Lawyers Partner with Legal Aid and Area Shelters to Help Victims of Domestic Violence.](#)" Appearing in the June 2015 issue of the Connecticut Bar Association's *Connecticut Lawyer*, the article discusses the importance of legal advocacy in helping victims of domestic abuse obtain court-issued protection and how legal resources fall far below the need. Featured in the article is the DVRO family court pro bono project in which Robinson+Cole has been involved since 2012. Connecticut Legal Services, the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, GHLA, and two domestic shelters have provided training and support. In the end, the pro bono representation enables victims to gain protection and empowerment and gives the lawyers who help them invaluable experience along with real personal and professional satisfaction.

### **CCADV RECOGNIZES ROBINSON+COLE AT FIRST 100 PLUS AWARDS CEREMONY**



The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) recognized Robinson+Cole with its Lawrence and Shirley Bostrom Pillars of Change Award at the First 100 Plus Awards Ceremony on November 6, 2015. The firm was honored for establishing Robinson+Cole's Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) Program, which provides pro bono representation to victims of domestic violence. Robinson+Cole partner Edward J. Heath accepted the award on behalf of the firm.

Additionally, Robinson+Cole partner Nuala E. Droney was among the individuals honored in this

year's First 100 Plus class. Originally designed to recognize men for their efforts in trying to prevent domestic violence and helping victims, this year's class is the first to also recognize women. Ms. Droney was recognized for her long-running leadership of the firm's DVRO Program and her efforts to organize statewide similar programs with other law firms.

*Photo: Pictured from left to right at the event are Robinson+Cole lawyer Kenneth C. Baldwin, Dan Mullin of Verizon Wireless, CCADV Board Chair David Bogan, Attorney General George Jepsen, Robinson+Cole lawyers Edward J. Heath and Eric D. Daniels, and Stephen Jewett of McDowell Jewett Communications. All are wearing purple ties in support of the Domestic Violence Awareness campaign.*

### **ROBINSON+COLE LAWYER OBTAINS ASYLUM FOR HEADMISTRESS OF EGYPTIAN GIRLS SCHOOL**

Robinson+Cole lawyer Karla L. Chaffee obtained asylum for her client, an Egyptian woman who was headmistress at a Christian girls school in Egypt. The client was severely beaten twice by men who did not believe she should be educating young Christian women. The case was complex, with a tangled story that required obtaining documents from Egypt and working with translators to prepare the asylum application and present the case at a hearing. The client is thrilled with the outcome, which allows her to remain in the United States with her daughter and grandson. Ms. Chaffee was assigned the case through PAIR, the Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project in Boston.

### **ROBINSON+COLE LAWYER RECEIVES CAPP 2015 BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Brian E. Moran, a business litigation partner in Robinson+Cole's Stamford office, received the CAPP Business Leadership Award on November 8, 2015, at the Ninth Annual Communion Breakfast for Business Leaders at Fairfield University. The award was conferred by Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice (CAPP), a lay-led, Vatican-based organization founded by Pope John Paul II in 1993. Mr. Moran was recognized for his significant contributions to the community through his philanthropic work. Most recently, working on behalf of the Malta Justice Initiative, Mr. Moran has advocated for criminal justice reform to reduce the size of our prisons and to help ex-offenders reintegrate into their communities. In 2014, he authored the book *The Justice Imperative: How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream* (Significance Press), which received the Bridgeport Re-Entry Collaborative's Urdang-Torres Community Impact Award and an Honorable Mention in the Top Ten Black Books of 2014.

### **LAND USE LAWYERS HALT ROAD CONSTRUCTION THROUGH ROCKY HILL FLOOD PLAIN**

Robinson+Cole lawyers Brian R. Smith, Evan J. Seeman, and Christie D. Jean recently secured a favorable judgment in a five-year-old zoning appeal on behalf of their client Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. (GMCT), a land trust spanning Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, and Glastonbury that strives "to save the floodplain's vital agricultural, scenic, archeological and wetland resources." The case involved GMCT's challenge to the Planning & Zoning Commission of the Town of Rocky Hill's 2010 approval of a fill permit application to allow for depositing recycled asphalt millings to construct a road leading to a landfill located in the Town's flood zone. On November 16, 2015, the New Britain Superior Court (Cohn, J.) agreed with GMCT and ruled that the commission had exceeded its authority in approving the application because the local zoning regulations did not allow the type of material (recycled asphalt millings) for construction of the road. A copy of the decision is available [here](#).

### **PBI RECOGNIZES ROBINSON+COLE'S COMMITMENT TO PRO BONO CHALLENGE**

At the annual Pro Bono Institute (PBI) dinner in New York in November, Robinson+Cole was recognized for its dedication to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge. The program challenges major law firms to commit to providing 3 or 5 percent of their billable hours to pro bono legal services.

### **ROBINSON+COLE HONORS LAWYERS FOR PRO BONO WORK**

Robinson+Cole's Pro Bono Committee recognized two lawyers with the firm's 2015 Pro Bono Award for their initiative and outstanding dedication to providing legal services to needy individuals and nonprofit organizations. Nuala E. Droney, a litigation partner, was honored for her active role with the CJA (Criminal Justice Act), handling domestic violence cases and mentoring associates with these matters,

and spearheading the initiative to get other Connecticut law firms to model domestic violence restraining order projects after Robinson+Cole's DVRO Program. Christie D. Jean, an associate in the land use group, was recognized for her role in several pro bono zoning appeal matters and her work with the Stamford Land Conservation Trust.

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#### 2015 PRO BONO COMMITTEE MEMBERS

[Peter R. Knight](#) | [Kenneth C. Baldwin](#) | [Karla L. Chaffee](#) | [Kathleen E. Dion](#)

[Edward J. Heath](#) | [Gregory J. Ligelis](#) | [Megan R. Naughton](#)

[Brian D. Nichols](#) | [Christopher S. Pitt](#) | [Taylor A. Shea](#)

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