

Debevoise
& Plimpton

Pro Bono Legal Service



Environmental Justice

Scenic Hudson, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Hudson River and Hudson River Valley of New York State, is a longtime pro bono client of the firm. We represent the organization with respect to internal governance questions, program support, and corporate transactions designed to further its mission of maintaining the natural beauty around the Hudson River.



Debevoise's Commitment to Pro Bono Legal Service

Debevoise lawyers have been dedicated to public service since our firm was founded in 1931. Pro bono legal service is a fundamental part of who we are and is critically important to those whom we assist.

Says Michael Blair, Debevoise Presiding Partner, "A strong commitment to pro bono work is a long-standing tradition at Debevoise and is deeply rooted in our firm culture. Our lawyers and staff pride themselves on providing the highest quality legal services to all of our clients, commercial and pro bono alike. Pro bono work at Debevoise not only satisfies our ethical obligation to help those in need, but is part of what makes our lawyers strong leaders in our practices and in our communities."

Others have taken note of our deep and long-standing commitment, as we are consistently ranked among the top law firms for pro bono work. We are regularly among the top firms in *The American Lawyer's* annual pro bono survey and *The American Lawyer's* "A-List," which is based in part on commitment to pro bono legal service.

Debevoise is a charter signatory to the Pro Bono Institute's Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge™, and has agreed to commit at least 5% of our annual billed time to pro bono matters, as well as a signatory to the New York City Bar Statement of Pro Bono Principles. We take on a large number of pro bono matters each year and our pro bono work ranges from landmark international and national disputes to representing low-income individuals in the communities in which we live and practice.

Debevoise lawyers obtain pro bono work from a variety of sources. Frequently, pro bono matters are referred to us by the legal service organizations with which the firm has long-standing relationships, including Legal Services NYC, Human Rights First, Her Justice, Start Small Think Big, The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, and LawWorks. Debevoise is also a supporting member of Pro Bono Deutschland e.V. Other pro bono projects come from our lawyers, often related to their interests outside of the firm.

We expect our lawyers to participate in pro bono activities throughout their careers, and we fully support our lawyers who do pro bono work regardless of whether it is within or outside of their particular practice areas. Our pro bono matters are handled like all other matters, with the dedication of all available firm resources needed for the representations.

We view pro bono work as an important element of our lawyers' professional development and work with lawyers to select pro bono matters that will help them to develop legal skills and substantive knowledge.

We staff summer associates on ongoing pro bono projects and provide special opportunities for summer associates to take primary responsibility for certain matters.

2016



66,268

Hours
Pro Bono Work

2016



100%

Summer
Associates

Averaging 133 hours per attorney
in the firm's U.S. offices.

Participated in pro bono matters.



71%

Partners



98%

Associates

Performed pro bono
work in the firm's U.S.
offices.



67%

All attorneys



at least
20

Hours of Pro Bono
Work

67 percent of attorneys
in our U. S. offices
performed at least 20
hours of pro bono work.

“As a summer associate, I was asked to join a pro bono matter because someone saw on my resume that I had worked with this organization in the past, and I started working with this client as a summer associate, and I can still call this organization a client today.”



Corporate Pro Bono

Our corporate lawyers provide a wide range of pro bono legal services. We assist not-for-profit organizations in entity formation, corporate governance, business operations, and employee benefits matters. We have advised organizations on mergers and real estate transactions and, when necessary, on how to wind down their operations and file for bankruptcy. We also counsel nongovernmental organizations operating internationally.

Corporate lawyers advise low-income entrepreneurs on selecting the right corporate form for their businesses, assist in drafting governance documents and contracts, and review leases and negotiate with landlords. Debevoise lawyers also assist low-income New York residents in seeking relief from overwhelming student debt.

When appropriate, we provide pro bono services to impact investment vehicles, benefit corporations, and social enterprises, including organizations providing banking and financial services to underserved communities.

Litigation Pro Bono

Debevoise litigators engage in a full range of pro bono activity, from representations of individuals who cannot afford legal counsel to high-impact litigation that is changing the law and the status of low-income or marginalized communities across the country and around the globe.

We represent clients, file amici briefs, conduct research and issue reports on matters of civil rights, education equality, international human rights, the death penalty, criminal defense, immigration and asylum, and employment and wage and hour violations, among other issues.

Tax Pro Bono

Lawyers in the Tax Department provide advice on a range of issues to not-for-profit organizations and to low-income entrepreneurs. We also represent low-income litigants in Tax Court and provide advice through tax clinics.

Cross-Department Pro Bono

Some of our most successful pro bono efforts are not linked to a particular department and give lawyers the opportunity to work with colleagues across practice areas. Lawyers from all departments work together on asylum applications, clemency petitions, name change petitions, and in immigration clinics.

Broad Partnerships

The firm has ongoing relationships with a wide variety of legal services organizations, including those listed below.

Access to Justice Foundation
Advocates for Children
Bronx Defenders
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Reproductive Rights
City Bar Justice Center
Free Representation Unit
Her Justice
Human Rights First
Immigration Equality
iProBono
Lambda Legal
LawWorks
Lawyers Alliance for New York

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Legal Aid Society
Legal Services NYC
National Pro Bono Centre
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
Office of the Appellate Defender
PILnet
Pro Bono in the London Muslim Community
Sanctuary for Families
Scenic Hudson
Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund
Urban Justice Center
Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
Volunteers of Legal Services



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In 2016, Debevoise attorneys represented more than 30 micro-entrepreneurs in New York City.

Law360

Five-Time Pro Bono Firm of the Year

Debevoise was named one of *Law360's "Pro Bono Firms of the Year"* for the fifth consecutive year in 2016.

National Law Journal

Lawyers Who Lead By Example

Partner Sarah A. W. Fitts was among the 2016 "Lawyers Who Lead by Example" in the Public Service category for her long commitment to public service including her service as a board member of the environmental organization Scenic Hudson.

Counsel Wendy B. Reilly was among the 2015 "Lawyers Who Lead by Example" in the Pro Bono category for her "outstanding record of providing crucial legal services to poor or nearly poor New Yorkers."

American Lawyer Global Pro Bono Deal of the Year

Debevoise won the Global Pro Bono Deal of the Year for its representation of Opportunity International in its sale of a majority stake in Kinshasa, a microfinance institution operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to VisionFund International.

Washington Lawyers' Committee

Debevoise was named a recipient of the Washington Lawyers' Committee 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award in recognition of the firm's pro bono representation of an immigrant who brought claims against her employer for harassing her on the basis of her national origin and English speaking ability.

Chambers & Partners

Debevoise counsel Wendy B. Reilly was named the "Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year" by Chambers & Partners.

New York State Courts Access to Justice Program

Morgan J. Hayes (partner, effective July 1, 2017) was recognized for his distinguished pro bono service by the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, the New York State Bar Association and at the New York County Lawyers' Association Pro Bono Volunteer Recognition Event.

City Bar Justice Center's 2016 Jeremy G. Epstein Award for Pro Bono Service

Debevoise associate Elie J. Worenklein was selected as the most outstanding volunteer by the Consumer Bankruptcy Project because of the quality and volume of legal work, his leadership in support of pro bono, his demonstrated commitment to the project and clients, and his willingness to take on challenging assignments.

Legal Services NYC

Debevoise was awarded Legal Services NYC's Pro Bono Leadership Award at LSNYC's 10th annual Jazz for Justice Benefit in 2017.

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