

A MESSAGE FROM

Chair Julie Jones and Managing Partner David Djaha

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE LAW IN ADVANCING JUSTICE

June 18, 2020

AT A TIME WHEN SOCIETY IS GRAPPLING WITH CRITICAL ISSUES OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY, we are heartened by two significant U.S. Supreme Court decisions this week that have an enormous impact for members of our communities and our extended Ropes & Gray family.

In a landmark June 15 ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*, the Supreme Court affirmed that “An employer who fires an individual merely for being gay or transgender violates Title VII” of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of sex. This decision is vital in affording essential workplace protections to millions of LGBTQ Americans. Of course, preventing discrimination is not necessarily the same as advancing inclusion; we must remain steadfast in our commitment to achieving both.

On June 18, the Court issued a more complicated decision regarding the fate of DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—the program under which nearly 700,000 undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children are protected from removal. In *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California et al.*, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that it was critical for the U.S. government to consider the impact of rescission of DACA on the lives of those who are full and valued members of our communities. This week’s ruling removes the immediate threat to the program, but the Court did not, as Chief Justice Roberts observed, “decide whether DACA or its rescission are sound policies.”

Ropes & Gray has long advocated for human rights, dignity, and the principles of justice and equality under the law, and

we are proud to have played a part in both of this week’s Supreme Court decisions. Our work in the Title VII cases, in which we filed an *amicus* brief advocating for the result the Court reached, builds on years of advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQ community. As part of a longstanding commitment to immigration-related *pro bono* work, we have also played a key role in protecting DACA and the interests of the “Dreamers” who are able to remain here under DACA. Together with co-counsel MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), we have worked to defend DACA against a challenge brought by Texas and several other states, and submitted an *amicus* brief with the Supreme Court on behalf of DACA recipients.

While neither of this week’s decisions represents a panacea for full equality, they are important reminders of the indispensable role of the law in advancing the cause of justice. It is here that we as Ropes & Gray lawyers, and as members of a community committed to providing the highest level of *pro bono* legal advice and support to those who need it most, can have the most impact. Now more than ever, it is time to redouble our efforts.

Julie Jones, Chair

David Djaha, Managing Partner
