

IN 2020, THE WORLD FACED not only a global health crisis, but also a global crisis of conscience. COVID-19 jeopardized the health of millions and forced us to change the way we live, practically overnight. At the same time, the shootings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other people of color in the United States ignited a global reckoning about systemic racism and the fairness of our institutions. The legal system had a major role to play in both crises—and Ropes & Gray lawyers and support team members stepped up to provide invaluable *pro bono* support, with over 155,560 recorded hours in 2020.

In a year when government coordination and aid was so important, we were proud to counsel coronavirus task forces in several of the nation’s major population centers—New York, Chicago and Boston. We helped launch a *pro bono* relief coalition that has assisted almost 350 small businesses and nonprofits, half of which are owned by people of color and 70% of which are women-owned. And we continue to give *pro bono* advice to ensure that vaccines are equally available to all.

To support racial justice efforts, we created a special *pro bono* initiative within the firm to take on new cases in the fight for racial justice and equity by collecting racial justice-focused referrals from our longtime partners, including the Innocence Project and Lawyers for Civil Rights, among others. We are already handling many projects in the areas of police reform, property rights and housing rights.

In 2020, we also focused on important *pro bono* work in the areas of voting rights and election protection, immigration, criminal justice, LGBTQ+ rights, disability rights, climate change and human trafficking. We invite you to learn more about what we did as a firm in 2020, and why we find *pro bono* work so gratifying.

DISMANTLING STRUCTURAL RACISM IN THE LAW

Ropes & Gray became a charter member of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance in 2020, a group of more than 285 law firms committed to identifying and dismantling structural and systemic racism in the law. Ropes & Gray Chair Julie Jones sits on the group’s advisory counsel, and Director and *Pro Bono* Counsel Roz Nasdor serves on its board of directors. As of the end of April, 58 of our lawyers have joined in working groups focused on identifying laws and regulations with discriminatory impact or gaps in the law on substantive issues such as reproductive rights, voting rights, police reform, criminal justice, health care and philanthropy.

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A YEAR OF RECORD Participation

Ropes & Gray went above and beyond in 2020 in response to extraordinary events. Here are some numerical highlights of a record year of participation.

- **100% participation by Shanghai and Silicon Valley.** All of our Shanghai attorneys met the firm’s 20-hour *pro bono* target in 2020—the second straight year of 100% participation by the office. And Silicon Valley became the first U.S. office to hit 100% participation.
- **6,700 hours.** Our summer associates put in 6,700 hours on projects ranging from helping families separated at the border seek asylum to working to advance racial justice and assisting small businesses and individuals with COVID-related legal issues.
- **38 fellowships.** We matched 38 incoming and current associates in public interest fellowships, including with the Center for Reproductive Rights, New England Innocence Project, Southern Environmental Law Center, Greater Boston Legal Services, NYU Stern Center for Business & Human Rights, and various governmental bodies.



PRO BONO NEWS

HOUSING INSECURITY: A Growing Problem

As the housing and eviction crisis worsened during COVID, Ropes & Gray teams stepped up to help clients. In Boston, we created the Massachusetts Housing Instability Task Force to prepare for an anticipated wave of COVID-related evictions. Through the task force, team members share updates about housing instability issues in Greater Boston and participate in clinics through the Volunteer Lawyers Project.

Associate **Jessica Bergin**, one of the task force leads, described the importance of this work: “Stable housing is fundamental. Without it, it’s difficult to keep a job, take care of health or support family members. By volunteering just a few hours at a housing clinic or a mediation, we help tenants stabilize their current housing or transition to their next home on favorable terms.”

The other task force leads are partners **Jeff Katz**, **Rob Roberts** and **Ali Rundlett**; senior counsel **Peter Rosenberg**; and associate **Marc Migliazzo**.

If you are interested in participating in these clinics, please contact the U.S. *pro bono* team. No litigation or housing court experience is needed.

Fighting to KEEP ELECTIONS FAIR

Ropes & Gray attorneys played an active role in election protection during an important presidential election year in the United States. Over 100 attorneys logged more than 2,000 *pro bono* hours on nonpartisan voter protection efforts in 2020. In 2021, we are taking on additional work in this area with the States United Democracy Center, where Ropes & Gray alum Joanna Lydgate is National Director, with a mission to ensure safe, fair and secure elections on a nonpartisan/bipartisan basis.

In addition to general election protection work, last summer, a team led by partner **Rob Jones** and associate **Patrick Roath**, partnering with Lawyers for Civil Rights, successfully concluded emergency

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DELIVERING COVID-19 Relief

WITH RENOWNED HEALTH CARE AND LIFE SCIENCES PRACTICES, Ropes & Gray has been in a unique position to provide *pro bono* advice throughout the pandemic to municipalities, government-related organizations, small businesses, nonprofits and individuals. Our team spent over 18,000 hours assisting with COVID-19 relief efforts, and this work continues. Here is a snapshot of what we have been doing:

- **Keeping businesses and nonprofits afloat.** In Boston, New York, California and London, we launched initiatives to help small businesses and nonprofits affected by the pandemic. We partnered with Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR), Lawyers Clearinghouse and several other Boston-area law firms, to launch the COVID Relief Coalition. Our lawyers and support team built an online hub to make it easy to learn about funding options and obtain *pro bono* assistance. In New York, we worked with the New York Small Business Legal Relief Alliance, a coalition of more than 20 firms, and in San Francisco, we partnered with Start Small, Think Big. *Pro bono* committee co-chair **Jenny Rikoski** led the charge to create a firmwide initiative, with partner **Christian Westra** leading the team in Boston, associate **Meghan Gilligan Palermo** leading the team in New York, and partner **Howard Glazer** and associate **Walton Dumas** leading the team in the Bay Area.
- **Coordinating state responses.** In New York, the Greater New York Hospital Association asked our team, led by partner **Stephen Warnke**, to help chart a course to increase access to care while contending with legal issues of liability and complex state regulations. We devised legal protections that led to a state immunity shield law. In Illinois, our team provided time-sensitive advice that was critical to the state’s response to the pandemic. And in Boston, led by Ropes & Gray Chair **Julie Jones** and partner **Mark Barnes**, our attorneys joined the Massachusetts High Technology Council to help guide the most challenging elements of Massachusetts’ response.

“The Small Business Legal Relief Alliance has been a unique opportunity to make a difference on the local level by helping small business neighbors and community members who have faced adversity and economic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been extremely rewarding to see firsthand the immediate impact of the Alliance’s work.”

— *Meghan Gilligan Palermo*,
Associate

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PRO BONO NEWS

Fighting to KEEP ELECTIONS FAIR

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litigation against the Massachusetts Secretary of Commonwealth, who had withheld the distribution of mail-in ballot applications in defiance of state law. As a result of the lawsuit, the Secretary sent out applications soon after the statutory deadline, enabling many voters in Massachusetts to exercise their right to vote without risking COVID-19 infection. That success built on earlier emergency litigation led by Rob and Patrick challenging Massachusetts ballot access provisions that required candidates to collect a large number of “in-person” signatures to appear on the ballot, despite official stay-at-home orders. In a groundbreaking decision, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that in light of the pandemic, the ballot access rules violated the Massachusetts constitution, and ordered changes to ballot access laws to make it easier for candidates to reach the ballot.

PARTNERING WITH CLIENTS During the Pandemic

At a time of unprecedented need, Ropes & Gray has seen a surge in requests from clients looking to help out in their communities. Our *pro bono* and alumni teams created a program to connect clients with our trusted *pro bono* partners and engage them in some of this important work. Through the program, clients team up with Ropes & Gray lawyers for trainings and virtual clinics. Participating clients include or have included AbbVie, Acceleron Pharma, Audax Group, Bain Capital, The Blackstone Group, Bloomberg, Brighthouse Financial, Medtronic, Pfizer, Sanofi, UBS Group and Vertex Pharmaceuticals.

DELIVERING COVID-19 Relief *(continued from page 2)*

- **Credentialing providers and obtaining PPE.** Our attorneys in Chicago, led by partner **Debbie Gersh**, helped large nonprofit health system Advocate Aurora Health procure licenses for 2,000 medical professionals from Wisconsin to practice in Illinois—a critical component of the state’s response. A team coordinated by counsel **Laurie Nelson** enabled nonprofit NYC Medics, which historically focused outside the United States, to recruit volunteer physicians, nurses and paramedics to address a domestic emergency for the first time. Led by counsel **Beth Weinman**, a team in Washington, D.C., gave a new nonprofit legal advice so that it could deliver medical equipment to frontline workers across the United States. In Shanghai, a team led by partner **Eric Wu** provided regulatory advice to the American Chamber of Commerce, allowing it to vet manufacturers seeking to export protective gear to the United States; we also advised the U.S. Consulate on the authorization of emergency use of medical devices for COVID-19 by U.S. government agencies, with a team led by partner **Katherine Wang**.
- **Tracking cases.** In coordination with the Illinois governor’s office and key privacy and technology leaders affiliated with the University of Chicago, our lawyers, led by partner **Paulita Pike**, advised P33, a technology nonprofit, on its breakthrough health care analytics platform that uses hospital data to track COVID-19 cases.
- **Advocating for the incarcerated.** Two teams worked to support the compassionate release of prisoners, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Partner **Brien O’Connor** was appointed Special Master by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to negotiate issues around the release of prisoners, leading a firm team that spent more than 2,800 hours assisting the court. Brien’s team included partners **Josh Levy, Rob Jones, Dan Ward** and **Rob Roberts**; associates **Kendall Dacey, Kevin Rich, Jay LeBlanc, Kelly DiSantis** and **Merry Sheehan**; and support team members **Ben Sherman, Margaret Wilson** and **Gillian Malek**. Across the country, partner **Joan McPhee** led another team that filed a class-action lawsuit demanding a reduction in the number of people held in U.S. Marshals Service custody in San Diego. The team included counsel **Alex Simkin** and **Helen Gugel**; associates **Nicole Horowitz, Natasa Siveski** and **Megan McEntee**; and senior litigation paralegal **Rogelio Jose Jr.**
- **Ensuring that vaccines are distributed equitably.** We are in the early stages of a groundbreaking project led by partners **Tom Bulleit** and

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PRO BONO NEWS

PROTECTING CHILD TRAFFICKING Victims

Over the course of 2020, a team of more than 30 lawyers from across Asia and the United States worked with The Remedy Project, a social enterprise focused on global supply chain labor compliance, and global NGO ECPAT (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking) to research legislation designed to combat child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

The team, led by counsel **Beth Weinman**, studied the United Nations conventions and protocols that establish a baseline for this type of legislation and then compared them with the legal and social welfare frameworks in six jurisdictions, including Malaysia and India.

Of the team's work, Archana Kotecha, CEO and founder of The Remedy Project, said, "This legal landscape legal analysis provides very important material for progressing advocacy and engagement on issues relating to the identification, referral and protection of child victims of trafficking." The 150-page report is intended to be used by policymakers, lawyers working on child exploitation cases and NGOs doing advocacy work.

GUIDING KENYA'S SOVEREIGN Wealth Fund

Ropes & Gray is providing the National Taxpayers Association of Kenya with guidance on draft legislation to establish a sovereign wealth fund in Kenya. Our memo to the organization compares the proposed model to established models in Ghana and Norway to ensure that the fund is used to benefit the country's poorest. The association has a constructive working relationship with the government and intends to publish a report based on our findings to advocate for legislative improvements.

Partner **Tom Alabaster**, who led the team's work, said, "Lawyers often think of *pro bono* as representing individual clients in litigation settings,

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DELIVERING COVID-19 Relief *(continued from page 3)*

John Chesley with the International Senior Lawyers Project that focuses on supporting global access to the COVID-19 vaccine through COVAX—the international initiative led by WHO and other global partners aimed at bringing vaccines to all countries. In the United States, a team led by retired partner **Peter Ebb** and partner **Stephen Warnke** is working with LCR to influence Massachusetts' vaccine public policy in real time. After LCR highlighted troubling statistics related to racial inequities in the state's vaccination programs and accessibility challenges for people living with disabilities, our team drafted a letter on behalf of LCR to serve as the basis for meetings between LCR and state regulators.

ADVOCATING FOR Racial Justice

IN THE WAKE OF THE UNITED STATES' reckoning with the shameful legacy of racism, Ropes & Gray committed to doing more to combat systemic racism and bias. We created a special *pro bono* initiative within the firm to take on new cases in the fight for racial justice and equity, with more than 600 people involved to date. Here are some highlights of this work:

Seeking police accountability and reform. We have been providing research and support for organizations and government officials seeking police reform, including the Policing Project at NYU Law, Legal Aid Society New York, and Lawyers for Civil Rights.

In the summer of 2020, a team led by partner **Chris Comeau** and associate **Xavier Frank** researched best practices for civilian oversight boards that review allegations of police misconduct and helped develop recommendations for establishing an oversight board for the Boston police department.

In January of this year, former Boston mayor Martin J. Walsh signed an ordinance, already approved by the Boston City Council, to create the Office of Police Accountability and Transparency (OPAT). The office establishes a single point of public access to a new standard in police accountability and community oversight, and will house and support the newly created Civilian Review Board, and the Internal Affairs Oversight Panel that builds on and strengthens the existing Community Ombudsman Oversight Panel Board. It also creates the overarching Office of Police Accountability and Transparency

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PRO BONO NEWS

GUIDING KENYA'S SOVEREIGN Wealth Fund *(continued from page 3)*

but at a firm like Ropes & Gray, we have the firepower and subject matter knowledge to do even more. I was really proud that our team could use our knowledge of global sovereign wealth funds to weigh in on legislation that will shape how Kenya's national wealth will be used for the benefit of all Kenyans, now and for generations to come."

In addition to Tom, the team included counsel **Lavanya Raghavan**, associate **Kayla Fourie** and trainee solicitor **Olivia Bennett**.

Noteworthy RECOGNITION

ROPES & GRAY regularly earns honors for our commitment to *pro bono* service. Here are some highlights of recent noteworthy recognition:

- **FOR A THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR**, Ropes & Gray ranked in the top 10 on *The American Lawyer's* 2020 *Pro Bono* Scorecard for *pro bono* work in the United States. We also ranked in the top 10 for commitment to international *pro bono*.
- **ROPES & GRAY** received the *Pro Bono* Institute's 2020 John H. Pickering Award in recognition of our outstanding institutional commitment to *pro bono* and the inspiring *pro bono* performance of our attorneys and business support professionals.
- **ROPES & GRAY** was named a 2020 Beacon of Justice Awardee by the National Legal Aid & Defender Association for our "extraordinary *pro bono* work serving vulnerable people fleeing to the U.S. border."
- **PUBLIC INTEREST LAW** Initiative recognized Ropes & Gray with its "2020 *Pro Bono* Initiative" award for outstanding contributions to public interest law and *pro bono* in Illinois.

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ADVOCATING FOR Racial Justice *(continued from page 4)*

(OPAT) Commission, which collectively holds subpoena power for the OPAT, Civilian Review Board, and Internal Affairs Oversight Panel. The new agency, which reflects our attorneys' research and recommendations, will aid the effort to spur systemic change.

Additionally, partner **Tom Bulleit** led a team (composed of associates **Matt Hevert**, **Taarika Sridhar**, **Cambrey Dent**, **Nicole Karatzas** and **Joe DeMedeiros**, and senior attorney **Jessica Dormitzer**) with Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR) that carefully reviewed the Boston Police Department's budget. The team produced a memo that identified functions or activities within the budget where LCR could advocate for different, additional or less spending. The memo also identified legal causes of action that have been or could be brought against police department budgets, and which plaintiffs might have standing in such cases.

Beyond this work, with our other legal services partners, we have:

- Provided research on structural barriers to police reform
- Protected those subjected to false arrest or police violence while participating in Black Lives Matter protests

We also joined a consortium of more than 30 law firms to endorse the now-successful repeal of Section 50-a of the New York State Civil Rights Law, which served as a barrier to police accountability.

Fighting to preserve diversity trainings. We served as co-counsel with Lambda Legal in successfully filing a federal lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's executive order prohibiting federal contractors and grantees from conducting workplace diversity trainings. The team includes partners **Doug Hallward-Driemeier**, **Kirsten Mayer** and **Anne Johnson Palmer**, and associates **Jessica Soto**, **Ethan Weinberg**, **Thanithia Billings**, **Annie Monjar** and **Nathalia Sosa**.

Protecting elderly people of color from property seizure. Ropes & Gray filed a lawsuit against the City of New York in the Second Circuit over the city's Third Party Transfer Program, which seizes property owned largely by elderly persons of color, divesting them of the value and long-term security inherent in their property ownership. We are urging the courts to stop this unconstitutional and discriminatory conduct and are seeking redress on behalf of those who have been affected. The team is led by partners **Gregg Weiner** and **Doug Hallward-Driemeier**, and includes counsel **Alex Simkin** and associates **Phillip Kraft**, **Dan Yanofsky**, **Deanna Minasi** and **Kyle Shaub**.

PRO BONO NEWS

Noteworthy RECOGNITION

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- **ROPES & GRAY** was honored for providing critical legal protection to immigrant children and unaccompanied minors by longtime *pro bono* partner Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). The firm received KIND's Allegiance Award at the nonprofit's 2021 gala.
- **WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL** again named Ropes & Gray to its list of "Top Law Firms by *Pro Bono* Hours in Greater D.C." Our attorneys, paralegals, summer associates and other professionals in Washington, D.C., contributed over 16,700 hours to *pro bono* legal services in 2020.
- **THE BOSTON BAR ASSOCIATION** honored Ropes & Gray with the Thurgood Marshall Award for our work with Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights on the groundbreaking Voting Rights suit in Lowell, Massachusetts. At the 2021 Beacon Awards, the Boston Bar Association also recognized the COVID Relief Coalition with the Empowerment Award.
- **THE MASSACHUSETTS SUPREME** Judicial Court presented partner **Christian Westra** with the prestigious Adams *Pro Bono* Publico Award in recognition of his work on behalf of the COVID Relief Coalition.
- **THE NATIONAL LAW JOURNAL** featured partner Amy Roy as one of its "Immigration Law Trailblazers" for 2020.
- **THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE** honored partner **Gregg Weiner** with the Edward Brodsky Founders Award in recognition of his longstanding commitment to the ADL's mission.
- **MARIJANE BENNER BROWNE**, director of global lateral partner recruitment, has been appointed by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts as one of three new co-chairs of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission.



Rocky Tsai
Partner
San Francisco

REFLECTIONS ON CHINATOWN RESIDENTS' FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Our clients in the *Valstock* case—the firm's *pro bono* litigation on behalf of residents of San Francisco's storied Chinatown—live a precarious existence. They are elderly immigrants who are not proficient in English. The only homes they can afford are single-room rental units, smaller than a studio and without separate kitchens or bathrooms. They are victims of abuse and discrimination when anti-Asian animus breaks out. But they are also so much more: caring grandparents, passionate citizens, and the lifeblood of a vital community that connects generations and is a core part of our American culture.

Following a 2016 corporate takeover of their buildings' ownership and affiliated property manager, our clients were told falsely that their longtime bilingual leases were no longer valid.

Their landlords taped up an English-only lease contract of adhesion to their doorways imposing fines, house rules and other changes to their tenancy rights without our clients' consent. Our clients were then subjected to fines, notices of "violation" of the house rules, and humiliation and harassment by their landlord.

The core dilemma facing our clients was: Which lease governed their rights as tenants? Last fall, our team won a motion for summary adjudication declaring that our clients' pre-existing translated lease agreements were controlling. The bilingual lease also contained an attorneys' fees provision that had been drafted to run only in favor of the landlord. We advanced the argument that the one-way provision must be applied reciprocally in favor of our clients. We won, and the court ordered the landlord and its affiliated property manager to pay us over \$1.1 million in fees.

The *Valstock* case epitomizes why *pro bono* is truly "for the good." Five of our associates had the opportunity to argue their first big-ticket motions in court or take their first offensive depositions. Most important, our clients have been vindicated in their contractual tenancy rights, with more to come when they get their day in court this summer on their other claims. After years of being ignored and taken advantage of, they have secured their right to live with dignity in their homes and have helped protect the integrity of San Francisco's Chinatown.

*The cross-office team assisting Rocky included partner **Chong Park**; associates **Danielle Bogaards**, **Nicole Horowitz**, **Traci Irvin**, **Leon Kotlyar**, **Chris Nienhaus**, **Carolyn Redding**, **Daniel Richards**, **David Serati**, **S.J. Tilden**, **Dan Yanofsky**, and **Kyle Zipf**; litigation program paralegals **Aaron Chow** and **Erin Morris**; and litigation paralegal specialist **Matthew Haut**.*



PRO BONO NEWS

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AIDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN in Mekong

WOMEN AND CHILDREN in Southeast Asia's Mekong region have long been among the most vulnerable to transnational organized crime (TOC), and the pandemic only magnified their inability to access legal services and policy relief. To address TOC issues in the region, governments and their partners needed an updated understanding of the regional policies, operational plans and capacities, and relief networks intended to serve these women and children.



A team of Ropes & Gray attorneys and support team members—coordinating across several offices in Asia and the

United States—teamed up with the DT Institute and Charles Sturt University to draft a report to provide this vital information. Our team helped research and draft the sections related to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, covering such issues as family and domestic violence, gender-based crimes, sexual exploitation in the nighttime economy, human trafficking, the role of women in organized crime, and supply and demand of illicit commodities.

The team includes partners **Andy Dale** and **Geoff Atkins**; counsel **David Y. Chen**; associates **Zack Gong**, **Cynthia Chan**, **Yujin Liu**, **Amanda Pine**, **Elias Feldman**, and **Nicole Pobre**; paralegals **Mark Callahan**, **Stella Chen**, **Kaori Gotoh**, **Jodie Hamilton**, **Rogelio Jose Jr.**, and senior research librarian **Kanas Chu**.

Restructuring a **WORKER-OWNED COMPANY**

ROPES & GRAY completed a consensual out-of-court restructuring of CERO Cooperative, a commercial composting company with a worker-owned cooperative model. CERO provides food waste pickup and diversion services for a wide range of commercial clients in the Boston area and transports compostable materials to local farms, where they are recycled into rich soil products. The restructuring transactions included a debt-for-equity swap and other loan modifications, as well as entry into new financing, resulting in the elimination of \$430,000 of debt and a raise of approximately \$365,000 in fresh capital.

Our team was led by associate **Andrew Glantz** and included partner **Pamela Glazier**, counsel **Sara Clevering**, senior associate **Isabelle Farrar**, and associates **Max Silverstein** and **Jacob Sikora**.