

Honoring Our Own

Each year, Ballard Spahr honors attorneys and staff for significant pro bono service.

Ballard Spahr donates \$1,000 to a charitable organization chosen by each award recipient. These awards are in addition to the \$25,000 Alan J. Davis Award given by the firm every summer in recognition of outstanding public service.

The 2014 honorees are:

National Conference of Black Mayors Investigation and Litigation — An investigation and litigation team led by Valarie J. Allen, David H. Pittinsky, BJay Pak, and Ethan Cohen scored a decisive victory for the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM) President, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, when a court ruled that Mayor Johnson, and therefore the officers of the NCBM, were legitimately elected. Mayor Johnson was elected to the NCBM presidency just as news broke that the organization was heavily in debt and had lost its tax-exempt status. He launched an investigation into the NCBM's Executive Director's use of the organization's funds for personal expenditures totaling at least \$623,000. The former director in turn challenged the election of Mayor Johnson and, by extension, other NCBM leaders. Ballard Spahr represented Mayor Johnson and the NCBM leadership pro bono in this matter.

Civil Forfeiture Defense Team — Although designed to permit confiscation of assets gained through criminal activity, civil forfeiture laws increasingly are used to seize the homes and assets of innocent relatives of wrongdoers. Ballard Spahr has a pro bono practice team that represents such victims, most of whom are poor and often elderly or disabled. In 2013, the team handled a trial over seizure of the home of two disabled women after the adult son of one was arrested for selling drugs at another location and an appellate argument and rehearing en banc in a matter raising novel issues under the Pennsylvania civil forfeiture statute.

Patrick H. Pugh — Mr. Pugh helped obtain identification papers for an elderly Colorado woman whose driver's license and passport were revoked after she was unable to produce documentation of her place of birth. Although her father was a naturalized U.S. citizen, and she had lived in the United States for almost her entire life, the client was unsure if she was born in the United States or Mexico. After five years investigating ways to establish the client's identity and obtain legal residency or citizenship for her, Mr. Pugh prepared an application for registry, which was granted, so that the client could be deemed a legal permanent resident.

The Neighborhood Interfaith Movement Representation — Led by Vincent J. Marriott III, a team of Ballard Spahr lawyers including Grant L. Cartwright, Edward I. Leeds, Jon T. Pearson, Sarah Schindler-Williams, and paralegal Jason E. Kittinger represented the Neighborhood Interfaith Movement (NIM), a 40-year-old social services agency in one of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods. In late 2012, NIM found itself in financial crisis. In the wake of the 2008 recession, the organization lost critical funding and grants and was forced to close. NIM's leadership wanted to preserve as many of its crucial social services programs as possible, and ensure that its mostly low-income employees were compensated. The Ballard Spahr team helped the organization develop a plan to unwind its operations and utilize the bankruptcy code to transition the vital community services provided by the agency.