

## **Honoring Our Own**

Each year, Ballard Spahr honors lawyers 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 \$5,000 Leonard E. Lindquist Award, adopted by the firm in 2018 with the mergers of Ballard Spahr and Lindquist & Vennum, and the \$25,000 Alan J. Davis Award given by the firm every year in recognition of outstanding public service.

The firm's 2017 honorees are:

- Leonard E. Lindquist Award - Advocacy for Individuals in Poverty
- Victor Copeland – for his advocacy with Homeless Youth Legal Clinic
- Thomas Lovett – for his advocacy with Youth Link
- Joshua Natzel – for his advocacy with St. Louis Park Emergency Program (STEP)
- Matthew Summers - for his advocacy with Homeless Persons Representation Project
- Emily Vaias – for her advocacy with Shepherd's Table
- Edward Wegerson – for his advocacy with Mary's Place

## **First Amendment Protection**

Media Law/ SPEECH Act (Securing the Protection of our Enduring and Established Constitutional Heritage Act). Ashley Kissinger, with assistance from Michael Berry, Matthew E. Kelley, and Maxwell S. Mishkin, represented a leading digital rights advocacy organization in seeking to enforce the SPEECH Act, a federal statute enacted in 2010 to combat "libel tourism"—the practice of libel plaintiffs suing in foreign jurisdictions where protections are weaker than in the United States. In a precedential opinion issued in November 2017, the federal district court in California declared that an Australian injunction censoring an American advocacy organization is repugnant to U.S. law and public policy and is, therefore, unenforceable. Courts have applied the SPEECH Act in only two other published cases. This case, therefore, provided much-needed precedent in this important area of defamation law.

## **Protection of Speech/Protests**

In the aftermath of the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law requested assistance to provide research and analysis on protection of speech and possible limitations government officials can place on rallies in public places when issuing permits, particularly if protestors are armed or violence is anticipated. Chuck Tobin, with assistance from Scott Humphreys, Matthew Kussmaul, Jeremy Sairsingh, and Lindsey Zions, compiled a comprehensive report entitled "Hate Rallies, Peaceful Protests, and the First Amendment."

**LGBTQ Rights** — Leslie John and Elizabeth Weissert represented a transgender female who sought to change her legal name to comport with her identity. Client's petition was denied based on a seven-year-old non-violent felony conviction. Leslie and Liz appealed the decision to the Superior Court, arguing that the statute allows individuals to seek a name change provided two years have elapsed from the completion of petitioner's sentence, and petitioner is not subject to probation or parole jurisdiction. Oral argument was held in May 2017. In November 2017, the appellate court issued its opinion to vacate and remand to lower court for further proceedings.

**Prisoners Civil Rights** — In a referral from the USDC's Prisoner Civil Rights Panel, Robert Haimes, Daniel Mullin, and Priya Roy spent two years representing an individual who was stabbed multiple times by another inmate at a federal correction facility. After protracted litigation, with multiple failed attempts by the US Attorney's office to dismiss the case, the parties settled for a five-digit sum. In addition to Rob, Dan, and Priya, the team included Jason Leckerman, and paralegals Keith Garland and Carey Kenny.

In 2017, Ballard Spahr donated more than 43,000 hours of pro bono legal work.