



Pro Bono

Access to legal counsel is a fundamental right of every citizen in a democratic society. Cozen O'Connor is committed to helping ensure that universal access is a reality. Since our founding in 1970, we have dedicated tens of thousands of attorney hours to pro bono representation of indigent individuals and charitable institutions. Central to this work is our belief that pro bono clients are just that — clients. And like all clients of this firm, they get sophisticated, tenacious, and responsive legal counsel.

PRO BONO PROGRAM

The Pro Bono Program is supervised by a full-time **Director of Pro Bono Engagement** who handles attorney outreach and assignments; builds a referral network of bar associations, public interest law firms, nonprofits, and government agencies; and oversees budgeting and institutional research. Those efforts are supported by members of the **Pro Bono Committee** in offices across the country who disseminate information and foster relationships with local public interest organizations.

Cozen O'Connor is a signatory to the **Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge of the Pro Bono Institute** and strives to provide 3 percent of billable hours to pro bono clients every year. We are steadily increasing the percentage of attorneys providing 20 or more hours of pro bono service per year, the average number of hours per lawyer per year and the total number of pro bono hours worked annually firmwide. Between 2016 and 2018, Cozen O'Connor climbed 32 places on **The American Lawyer's annual pro bono ranking** of the nation's largest law firms.

AREAS OF SERVICE

Our pro bono program, like all of our practices, is entrepreneurial, flexible, and attorney-driven. We ask attorneys to consider their interests, passions, skills, and schedule in order to identify appropriate and tailored opportunities for pro bono

service.

Because attorneys drive their own pro bono practices, Cozen O'Connor's pro bono portfolio is varied and expansive. We have attorneys working in jurisdictions across the nation on matters related to immigration, child custody, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, civil rights, veteran's rights, housing, the arts, education, religious freedom, and more.

Here are some of the ways that Cozen O'Connor attorneys are making a difference.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

Veterans and Active Military

- Work with the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) and Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program to represent veterans in disability claims who have experienced service-related harms, including combat injuries and military sexual trauma.
- Advise veterans about their rights under the tax code and help file amended tax returns on behalf of veterans whose tax refunds are wrongly withheld.
- Work with the ABA Military Pro Bono Center to represent veterans in foreclosure, landlord-tenant, family law, and consumer protection matters that arise while soldiers are on active duty. Cozen O'Connor attorneys frequently appear before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Wrongful Convictions & Criminal Justice

- Worked in close partnership with the Pennsylvania Innocence Project to secure the release of Dontia Patterson. Patterson was convicted at age 17 for a murder he did not commit and spent 12 years in prison before his exoneration in May 2018.
- Partnered with the Illinois Innocence Project to win exoneration for William Amor, a man wrongly convicted of murder and aggravated arson. At the time of Amor's release, he had served 22 years of an unjust 45-year sentence.
- Represented Tyrone Jones, the first inmate in Philadelphia to apply for resentencing after the Supreme Court opinions holding mandatory life sentences for juveniles unconstitutional.

Impact Litigation

- Co-counsel with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in a critical voting rights case in Terrebonne Parish, La. The plaintiffs, four individual black voters, filed suit in 2014 to challenge the at-large method for judicial elections, a deliberately discriminatory system used to dilute the votes of black voters, which had persisted in the parish for nearly 50 years. The district court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in 2017 and an affirmative remedy is being implemented.
- Sued the city of St. Paul on behalf of the First Lutheran Church of St. Paul. The church operates a daytime drop-in shelter for the homeless that provides facilities, food, clothes, and access to social and career services to hundreds of indigent

people. After receiving complaints, the city passed a set of highly restrictive rules intended to stop the shelter from operating. The church contends these ordinances interfere with its ability to fulfill its religious duty to serve and provide sanctuary to the needy, thereby violating the free exercise of religion clause and other federal regulations. The court granted a preliminary injunction, which allows the shelter to operate as we move toward trial.

- Filed suit, along with co-counsel from Public Counsel and the Public Interest Law Project, against the city of Inglewood, Calif., claiming that the city's deal to sell public land to a private developer to build a new stadium for the Clippers violates state law meant to spur the creation of affordable housing. The suit seeks to void the city's contract and force development of more than 100 units of affordable housing.

Immigration

- Partner with Kids in Need of Defense to represent children who are unaccompanied minors or who were separated from their parents at the border.
- Work closely with nonprofits such as the National Immigration Justice Center, HIAS, and Northwest Immigrant Rights Project to represent asylum seekers who were persecuted in their homelands and face a credible threat of violence if deported from the United States.
- Work with Immigration Equality to provide advice and legal services to LGBTQ and HIV-positive immigrants who are seeking refuge and fair treatment in the U.S.

LGBTQ Rights

- Co-counsel with the Pennsylvania ACLU in a case defending the Boyertown School District's policy of permitting students to use facilities consistent with their gender identities. We are currently writing an *amicus* brief on behalf of a similarly positioned school district.
- Lead a class action lawsuit in California Superior Court with Lambda Legal against A.J. Boggs & Company on behalf of 93 low-income Californians living with HIV whose confidential medical records – including HIV status – were compromised by a data breach of Boggs's online enrollment system. The court has overruled a Boggs-filed demurrer and ordered that discovery proceed.
- Assist transgender people to change their legal name.

Intellectual Property

- Assist startup businesses and nonprofits with trademark and copyright questions. We have assisted numerous new businesses with trademarking their names and helped artists protect their creative efforts from copyright infringement.
- Settled a trademark infringement dispute on behalf of Broadway Bound Kids, a performing arts education organization based in New York City.
- Represented a freelance photographer whose copyrights were infringed by a former client who continued to use a series of photographs of puppies after its license expired. An IP lawyer from the Florida office uncovered details about the extent of the unauthorized use and industry licensing rates, allowing the firm to negotiate a \$35,000 settlement for the client.

Transactional

- Represented a nonprofit startup in New York, Girls to Grandmasters, Inc., that encourages girls to learn chess and compete successfully in the male-dominated chess world. Assisted with nonprofit incorporation under New York law, counseled them through the process of developing a board of directors, drafted corporate bylaws and organizational resolutions, and secured tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status.
- Work in partnership with VIP, a Philadelphia nonprofit that provides legal services to low-income residents, helping families whose property has been passed down through generations to clear title so that they can continue to repair and live in their homes. This project helps families and protects entire neighborhoods from the blight of abandoned buildings.
- Help transfer ownership of a historic 19th-century cemetery that had fallen into disrepair to a nonprofit capable of restoration and continued maintenance.
- Work with the nonprofit Start Small – Think Big to assist numerous small businesses in the New York Metropolitan area with employment-related issues, including classification of independent contractors, independent contractor agreements, compliance with New York’s Wage Theft Prevention Act and human resource policies that help businesses succeed and grow.

Child Custody

- Staff day-long guardianship clinics several times a year with the support of the nonprofit law firm Public Counsel. These clinics are open to pro bono clients seeking to file for legal guardianship of a child in their custody.
- Assist children and guardians in the adoption process as they navigate the legal hurdles to forming a recognized and protected family.
- Work with the Center for Child Advocates representing minors in dependency proceedings.

Housing

- In partnership with Access Living in Chicago and others, represent people with disabilities to ensure that they receive appropriate accommodations in their housing.
- Represent low-income tenants in eviction and rent increase litigation. For instance, an attorney recently protected a single mother and her five children from eviction by a landlord who had improperly attempted to increase the rent on her rent-controlled apartment.
- Represented a young single mother in Chicago who works full time and attends school in a successful lawsuit against the landlord who wrongfully evicted her and withheld her security deposit.



[Pro Bono](#)

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For More Information Contact:



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NEWS & EVENTS

How teamwork won asylum for a Mexican family [Daily Herald]

Julie Trester wrote about her personal experience helping lead the asylum victory of a young Mexican mother and her children.

Jim Argionis: Acting Locally

Jim Argionis, a member in the firm's Commercial Litigation Department, was the subject of a feature story in Chicago Lawyer magazine.

First Lutheran Church Reaches Settlement with City of Saint Paul in Religious Liberty Suit

In the settlement, the city acknowledged that RLUIPA is an important and central aspect of its land use decisions and is a primary consideration in processing and responding to land use applications made to the city.



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