

Pro Bono

Williams & Connolly is nationally recognized for its lawyers' significant commitment to pro bono work. Among other successful pro bono initiatives, the firm partners with Maryland Public Defender's Offices to take criminal cases to trial and on appeal, and with a number of groups, including CAIR Coalition and the Texas Civil Rights Project, to represent individuals seeking asylum in the United States. More than 200 Williams & Connolly attorneys have handled trial-level felony cases through a pro bono partnership that the Maryland Public Defender's Office has called an "amazing success."

Representative pro bono matters include representing plaintiffs in civil rights lawsuits, low-income individuals in housing, and wage and benefits cases for indigent tenants in the District of Columbia, military veterans in benefits appeals, and District of Columbia parolees in parole revocation hearings. The firm has been recognized by the DC Circuit Judicial Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services for the depth and breadth of its pro bono commitment. It also has received the Outstanding Achievement Award of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs for its work on asylum and immigrants' rights cases. The DC Bar Pro Bono Program recognized the firm for its work with the Affordable Housing Preservation Project and the Landlord Tenant Resource Center, and for joining the DC Bar Pro Bono Partnership. Bread for the City recently named the firm Pro Bono Legal Partner of the Year for work on behalf of tenants.

The firm is a signatory to the Pro Bono Institute's Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge and the District of Columbia Bar's Pro Bono Initiative, and has launched a Consumer Law Resource Center with the DC Bar Pro Bono Program.

Williams & Connolly lawyers have achieved significant victories for pro bono clients at trial, on appeal and at hearings. The firm is currently handling two post-conviction death penalty cases -- one involving application of recent Supreme Court precedent regarding the rights of intellectually disabled defendants and one involving habeas review of the first federal death sentence handed down in the First Circuit. The firm successfully represented an unarmed person shot by the United States Park Police. At trials in several matters, Williams & Connolly lawyers won acquittals for criminal defendants in a burglary trial, in a credit card and identity theft case, on charges of assault, and others. Williams & Connolly lawyers twice overturned a client's murder conviction in the Maryland Court of Appeals after trying the case, and have tried many other cases for pro bono clients. The firm also vacated convictions on appeal based on the state's failure to turn over evidence to defense counsel prior to trial, for insufficiency of the evidence, on standing grounds to challenge a search, and by demonstrating the inapplicability of the transferred intent doctrine.

In asylum cases, firm lawyers successfully represented a political activist who had been persecuted in Cameroon, a missionary from the Congo, and received a grant of asylum after an evidentiary hearing for a family based on the fear that the women would face mutilation if forced to return to Egypt. The firm also successfully helped overturn in the Second Circuit a Board of Immigration Appeals decision denying asylum to women from Guinea. The Center for Gender and Refugee Studies has honored the firm for its outstanding contributions. The firm also obtained permission for a nonprofit organization to credential poll watchers in Maryland for the 2004 Presidential election. Young lawyers at the firm have also successfully represented a number of clients in parole revocation evidentiary hearings.

Williams & Connolly employees also serve the community outside the courtroom. They volunteer to teach at Dunbar Senior High School, which earned the firm the Outstanding Achievement Award of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. Firm employees also volunteer at Thurgood Marshall Academy, a law-oriented public charter high school, teaching and mentoring students. The Academy named a classroom after firm founder Edward Bennett Williams in recognition of the firm's support.