

Debevoise
& Plimpton

Pro Bono Legal Service





Debevoise advised its longtime pro bono client Accompany Capital in its participation in New York City's Taxi Medallion Relief Program

("MRP") to refinance medallion loans of New York City taxi medallion owners. For more than 20 years, Accompany Capital has provided strategic financing services with a focus on the needs of immigrants and refugees.

Due to a rapid fall in value of medallions and fall in taxi ridership, many taxi medallion owners were unable to make the loan payments on their medallions and faced the threat of personal bankruptcy. MRP was adopted to allow eligible medallion owners to apply for grants and to refinance their medallion debt to reduce monthly payments.

MRP stakeholders include the city government, the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, the medallion owners and the lenders. Debevoise reviewed and negotiated the agreements governing Accompany Capital's participation in MRP. Accompany Capital was able to refinance the medallion loans of several NYC medallion owners. Over the years, Debevoise has assisted Accompany Capital and its clients on a variety of matters, including its spin-off as an independent organization in 2009.



Pro Bono Legal Service

Debevoise has had an unwavering commitment to our pro bono clients since our firm was founded in 1931. Across all practice groups, we provide pro bono legal services to help close the justice gap and create a more equitable society. Our pro bono work has three main goals: to provide legal representation to people who could not otherwise afford it, to strengthen the communities in which we live and work, and to protect civil liberties and public rights in the United States and around the world.

Says Peter Furci, Debevoise’s Presiding Partner, “Our pro bono work is central to our firm culture. From partners to first-year associates, Debevoise is committed to providing pro bono legal services to fight injustice, increase the capacity and impact of organizations working with marginalized communities, and level the playing field for low-income individuals in legal proceedings. We bring the same energy and dedication to our pro bono matters as we do our billable work. Our pro bono work also gives our associates opportunities to lead matters, work directly with clients, and develop substantive legal skills.”

Our lawyers in the United States provided nearly 100,000 hours of free legal services in 2023. By providing direct representations and partnering with human rights, legal reform and other organizations, Debevoise helps individuals, underserved communities, nonprofit organizations and small businesses.

Ranked among the top law firms in *The American Lawyer’s* annual pro bono survey, Debevoise is consistently recognized for having a deep and long-standing commitment to pro bono. We are the only law firm to appear on *The American Lawyer’s* A-List every year since the list was created—which is based in part on commitment to pro bono legal service—and ranked in the top ten in 2023. Debevoise is a charter signatory to the Pro Bono Institute’s Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge™, and has agreed to commit at least 5% of our annual billed time to pro bono matters. We are also a signatory to the New York City Bar Statement of Pro Bono Principles and a member of the UK Collaborative Plan for Pro Bono.

We work on hundreds of pro bono matters each year that range from landmark international and national disputes to representing low-income individuals in the communities in which we live and practice.

Debevoise lawyers obtain pro bono work from a variety of sources. Frequently, pro bono matters are referred to us by legal service organizations with which the firm has long-standing relationships, including The Legal Aid Society, Sanctuary for Families, Human Rights First, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Immigration Equality and Start Small Think Big. Other pro bono projects come from our lawyers, who are inspired by a cause. Our lawyers make their matters count by making them their own, and our clients notice the difference.

Our lawyers participate in pro bono activities throughout their careers, and we fully support our lawyers’ pro bono work, regardless of whether it is within or outside of their particular practice areas. Our pro bono matters are handled like all other matters, with the dedication of all available firm resources needed for the representations.

We view pro bono work as an important element of our lawyers’ professional development and work with lawyers to select pro bono matters that will help them develop legal skills and substantive knowledge. We staff summer associates on ongoing pro bono projects and provide special opportunities for summer associates to take primary responsibility for certain matters.



In 2023, Debevoise lawyers in the United States performed over 99,000 hours of pro bono work, averaging more than 122 hours per lawyer.



In 2023, 96% of Debevoise summer associates worked on pro bono matters.



In 2023, 74% of associates and 64% of all lawyers in the firm's U.S. offices performed at least 20 hours of pro bono work.



In 2023, Debevoise lawyers worked on more than 1000 pro bono matters.

Corporate Pro Bono

Our corporate lawyers provide a wide range of pro bono legal services. We assist not-for-profit organizations in entity formation, corporate governance, business operations and employee benefits matters. We also advise organizations on mergers and other strategic transactions, on real estate matters and, when necessary, on how to wind down their operations and file for bankruptcy. Our practice includes organizations based in the United States and nongovernmental organizations operating internationally.

Corporate lawyers advise low-income entrepreneurs on selecting the right corporate form for their businesses, assist in drafting governance documents and contracts, and review leases and negotiate with landlords. When appropriate, we provide pro bono services to impact investment vehicles, benefit corporations and social enterprises, including organizations seeking to provide banking and financial services to underserved communities.

Litigation Pro Bono

Debevoise litigators engage in a full range of pro bono activity, from representations of individuals who cannot afford legal counsel to high-impact litigation that is challenging systemic racism and changing the law and the status of low-income or marginalized communities across the country and around the globe.

We represent clients, file amici briefs, conduct research and issue reports. We work extensively in the areas of criminal justice reform, civil rights, international human rights, the death penalty, criminal defense, immigration, and employment and wage and hour violations.

Tax Pro Bono

Lawyers in the Tax Department provide advice on a range of issues to not-for-profit organizations and to low-income entrepreneurs. We also represent low-income litigants in Tax Court.



“As a summer associate, I had the opportunity to work on several pro bono matters. I helped research and draft an appellate brief challenging the Department of Homeland Security’s plan to build a border wall through a butterfly sanctuary and did research on how to use the Alien Tort Statute to hold human rights violators abroad accountable in U.S. courts. I also drafted a motion for compassionate release as part of the Holloway Project and helped immigrants with their asylum and temporary protected status applications. Pro bono work gave me a chance to do incredibly substantive work as a summer while advancing issues that are important to me.”

Alexa Busser Lopez
Litigation Associate

Cross-Department Pro Bono

Some of our most successful pro bono efforts are not tied to a particular department and give lawyers the opportunity to work with colleagues from other practice areas. Lawyers from all departments work together on affirmative immigration matters, including asylum, legal permanent resident and naturalization applications; uncontested divorces; and name change petitions.

The firm has ongoing relationships with a wide variety of legal services organizations, including those listed below.

Broad Partnerships

Advocates for Children	Lawyers for a Sustainable Economy
Center for Constitutional Rights	Legal Services NYC
Center for Justice and Accountability	National Center for Lesbian Rights
Center for Reproductive Rights	National Pro Bono Centre
Centre for Criminal Appeals	New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
City Bar Justice Center	Office of the Appellate Defender
Clooney Foundation for Justice	PILnet
Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice	Sanctuary for Families
Eyewitness to Atrocities	Start Small Think Big
Hackney Law Centre	Tahirih Justice Center
Her Justice	The Legal Aid Society
Human Dignity Trust	UnLtd
Human Rights First	Urban Justice Center
Immigration Equality	Veteran Advocacy Project
Lambda Legal	Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
Lawyers Alliance for New York	Volunteers of Legal Services
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	

The Holloway Project

For the past eight years, Debevoise lawyers have worked to reduce excessive prison sentences that were required by harsh federal sentencing guidelines, which Congress has since corrected. This effort, known as The Holloway Project and led by former federal prosecutor and former U.S. District Judge John Gleeson, has already resulted in reduced sentences for 56 federal prisoners and shaved more than 2200 years off of their sentences. Since 2016, more than 200 lawyers have spent more than 54,000 hours on Holloway representations.



Pro Bono Awards and Recognition

The firm is broadly recognized for our dedication to pro bono legal services:

- Received a **2023 Institutional Cornerstone Award from the Lawyers Alliance for New York**. Over the past five years, through the firm's partnership with Lawyers Alliance, more than 100 Debevoise lawyers have handled nearly 50 substantial legal matters for nonprofits, including Accompany Capital, Think!Chinatown, Bay Ridge Center and Covenant Ballet Theatre of Brooklyn.
- The firm's collaboration in the **Domestic Abuse Response Alliance won the Local Impact Award at the 2023 PILnet forum's Global Awards** and was named Pro Bono Initiative of the Year at The Lawyer Awards, 2023.
- Received the **Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSO) 2023 Justice Award**.
- Recognized at the **Financial Times' 2023 Innovative Lawyer Europe Awards** for the firm's work on the Afghan Pro Bono Initiative.
- Partner and Co-Chair of the Commercial Litigation Group, Mark P. Goodman, received **The Legal Aid Society's 2023 Servant of Justice Award**, recognizing lawyers who have demonstrated a dedicated commitment to the pursuit of equitable justice and have gone "above and beyond" to support the work of The Legal Aid Society and New York City communities.
- Litigation partner and former judge John Gleeson received **The American Lawyer's Lifetime Achievement Award**. Mr. Gleeson founded and runs The Holloway Project, a pro bono initiative dedicated to obtaining sentencing relief for inmates, largely men of color, who received egregiously long prison sentences due to mandatory minimum provisions that Congress has since overturned.
- Pro bono counsel Jennifer Cowan received the **Muslim Bar Association of New York's 2023 Champion of Justice Award** for her exceptional commitment to social justice and pro bono representation.
- Associate Sol Czerwonko and former associate Emily Rebecca Hush received a **Commitment to Justice Award from Her Justice** for their assistance to undocumented workers applying for state COVID relief benefits.
- Associate Ned Terrace was included on the **Pro Bono Honor Roll by Volunteers for Legal Services** for his extensive pro bono work with low-income entrepreneurs.
- A team of Debevoise lawyers including partner Dietmar Prager, associate Juan Fandino, and former associate Ann Manov received a **Michael Cooper Celebration of International Pro Bono Excellence Award from the Vance Center** for their outstanding research on the right of judges to freedom of expression.

To learn more about our firm and what we're passionate about, follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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