

2020 Pro Bono Snapshot

"We educated, privileged lawyers have a professional and moral duty to represent the underrepresented in our society, to ensure that justice exists for all, both legal and economic justice."

– Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor

Pro bono work is deeply rooted in our firm's history and culture. Equal access to justice is fundamental to a fair and equitable society, and the responsibility to create access to justice has sustained our dedication to pro bono work for generations. Often those most in need of legal representation are the least able to afford it, which is why we have dedicated legal resources and tens of thousands of hours to a multitude of causes since our founding in 1890. Our focus on pro bono clients in San Francisco and the Bay Area allows our attorneys to have direct impact on the lives of people in the areas in which they live and work. As Justice Sotomayor mentions, the work to balance the scales of justice is our duty, but more importantly, at Coblentz, it is our privilege.

2020 By The Numbers

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 4,840 | hours dedicated to pro bono firm-wide |
| 34 | new pro bono matters |
| 71 | active pro bono matters |
| 77% | of our attorneys committed time to pro bono matters |

Partner Organizations

Coblentz is proud to be affiliated with a number of local and national organizations to offer important pro bono assistance, including:

- American Civil Liberties Union
- California Lawyers for the Arts
- Centro Legal de la Raza
- City Arts & Lectures
- Community Housing Partnership
- Community Land Trust Association of West Marin
- Community Organization Representation Project

- Constitutional Rights Foundation High School Mock Trial
- Emerge America
- Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence
- Good Samaritan Family Resource Center
- Hastings Moot Court
- Justice & Diversity Center
- Law Firm Antiracism Alliance
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
- Legal Aid at Work
- Legal Services for Children
- Legal Services for Entrepreneurs
- Mendocino County Fire Safe Council
- Middle District of Alabama Federal Defenders Program
- NACDL/FAMM State Clemency Project
- Oakland LGBTQ Community Center
- Public Advocates Inc.
- Sausalito Marin City Little League
- ScholarMatch
- SF New Deal
- Sustainable Economies Law Center
- Swords to Plowshares
- UnaMesa Association
- Women's Sports Foundation

Pro Bono Highlights

2020 Pro Bono Award

Rosan Agbajoh: Discrimination Defense

Coblentz attorney Rosan Agbajoh represented a former social worker for Napa County who had pursued a pro se case of racial discrimination, harassment, and retaliation on her own for two years, and was able to negotiate a favorable settlement for the client. For her hard work and strategic thinking on this matter, Rosan was named our 2020 Pro Bono Award winner.

Featured Pro Bono Work

Ensuring Voting Rights are Protected

Coordinating with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, Coblentz attorneys coordinated and volunteered time for non-partisan election protection efforts leading up to the November election. This election protection work provided critical support during a challenging election. More than 30 attorneys volunteered their time by poll monitoring, both locally and in "swing states," and by staffing regional voter hotlines to answer voter questions and assist with registration, mail-in voting, and other questions.

Supporting Black Lives Matter Protests

Coblentz attorneys and staff assisted the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights in their defense of recent Black Lives Matter protests with key research into local ordinances.

Improving Prison Conditions

Coblentz attorneys are representing the Federal Defenders in Alabama in potential litigation of the prison conditions of death row inmates in Alabama state prison. The inmates suffer from horrific conditions, including raw sewage in their cells, and are soon to be moved to a separate, segregated unit that suffers from un-remediated black mold and that likely subjects them to 22 or more hours a day locked in their windowless cells without access to televisions or many personal items. We are working to improve the conditions of their confinement.

Fighting Against Lethal Injection

Coblentz attorneys are working with the American Civil Liberties Union on its challenge to the California lethal injection protocol for implementing the death penalty.

Help for DACA Recipients

Coblentz attorneys participated in a Justice & Diversity Center volunteer program with then-Senator Kamala Harris' office to assist recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The program focused on providing one-on-one trainings to DACA recipients on protecting their ability to work in the United States in the face of uncertainty surrounding the DACA program.

Help for Prisoners at Risk for COVID

Coblentz attorneys took on cases for inmates with health conditions whose lives were threatened because of the COVID outbreak in prisons, working to minimize the danger COVID poses to incarcerated individuals.

Supporting A Pandemic Non-Profit

Coblentz attorneys worked to form and obtain tax-exempt status for an organization that works with local businesses to prepare food for distribution to residents most vulnerable during the COVID pandemic. The organization also supports San Francisco small businesses particularly affected by the pandemic, including because of racial-, economic-, or gender-based inequality.

Standing Up for Small Employer Rights

Coblentz attorneys, through the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California's Justice & Diversity Center, took on representing a small Bay Area electrician in his dispute with a local union over employee benefits, representing the electrician at two settlement conferences.

Supporting Organizations to Support Families

A Coblentz attorney assisted APA Family Support Services in employment-related projects, which ensured proper staff classification and provided an updated employee handbook. The organization promotes healthy children and families by providing family support services to prevent child abuse and domestic violence.