

## 2019 Earl G. Harrison Pro Bono Award

### Ralph G. Wellington



Ralph G. Wellington, former Chairman of the Firm and Co-Chair of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Practice Group, is being honored by the Firm with the 2019 Earl G. Harrison Pro Bono Award. This award is presented annually to an attorney who has a distinguished record of pro bono service of enduring value to the public good.

Wellington personifies Schnader's proud tradition of pro bono service, tracing its roots to the founding of the Firm in 1935. Wellington has handled a wide range of matters, including representing individuals seeking asylum in the United States for HIAS Pennsylvania and those wrongly accused of crimes for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project. He has assisted both homeless families in shelters and helped to meet the organizational needs of nonprofits such as the Lutheran Settlement House. In addition to helping numerous individuals and arts organizations through the Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (PVLA), Wellington also assisted prominent Russian-born painter, Vladimir Kandelaki, in recovering works that had been misappropriated. Wellington spends significant time supporting Schnader's pro bono program by mentoring other attorneys and assisting in their volunteer cases.

If one case reflects Wellington's sustained commitment to pro bono, it might be his two-year effort to help restore the life and profession of Vladimir Kandelaki. The Russian artist was enticed to come to the United States by individuals posing as art promoters, who then kept his artwork and did not promote him as promised, thus threatening his welfare and security. Wellington litigated for two years to retrieve all of the artwork, earning Kandelaki's gratitude and his subsequent valuable contributions in support of the PVLA. Finally, Wellington has been recognized for his pro bono efforts by the Philadelphia Volunteers for the Indigent Program (VIP), the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Inquirer Influencer of Law Award.

"Ralph's pro bono work shows profound dedication to the higher calling of the law and the ideals of helping individuals who could not otherwise afford legal representation," said Stephen A. Fogdall, Chair of the Firm's Pro Bono Committee and Co-Chair of the Financial Services Litigation Practice Group.

**Q: Are you currently working on any pro bono matters?**

**A:** I just completed an intense three month effort to rescue the Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts from going out of service. PVLA is now fully restored and relaunched as an independent nonprofit with its own board and funding. Artists and arts organizations are so important to community well-being, and PVLA has always played a big part in the success and sustainability of this aspect of our wonderful city.

**Q: Why did you choose to become a litigator?**

**A:** It just seemed to resonate with me. Over time, I have truly loved the verbal and written synthesis of ideas and issues that lies at the heart of all good litigation. Plus, I have always played sports and I like the competitive nature of being a litigator.

**Q: How have your pro bono cases inspired you?**

**A:** Doing good, while doing well, has been the culture of this firm from its founding. I am currently working with Alex Fahringer on a case for the Innocence Project, involving a man wrongfully convicted for murder who has spent 28 years in prison on a life sentence. Getting deeply involved in righting injustice is so powerful, far beyond just hearing about these compelling cases. It's an amazing thing to be part of trying to resurrect a person's life.

**Q: How do you think this pro bono work can encourage others?**

**A:** Bernie Segal said "The ticket to the legal profession brings with it a responsibility to do the right thing." I have found pro bono work to be a highly worthwhile part of living, far beyond a mere professional duty.