

2020 Earl G. Harrison Pro Bono Award

Edward J. Sholinsky



Edward J. Sholinsky, partner in the Litigation Services Department and a member of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, is being honored by the Firm with the 2020 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.

Through his own matters and leadership roles within the Firm, Sholinsky has sustained Schnader's proud tradition of pro bono service which traces its roots to the founding of the Firm in 1935. Sholinsky's pro bono matters have ranged from representing the ACLU of New Jersey in winning a precedential appellate case protecting students from excessive discipline for out-of-school conduct (*G.D.M. v. Bd. of Educ. of the Ramapo Indian Hills Regional High School Dist.*), to helping juvenile immigrants abandoned by their parents to achieve legal immigration status, and representing those in need in numerous other cases. "Ed fully reflects the higher calling of the law with his many pro bono efforts in assisting 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.

For example, Sholinsky achieved sizable monetary awards in two prisoner civil rights cases. In one matter, a jury found that the Warden of Berks County Jail had violated a prisoner's First Amendment rights by using harsh treatment and denial of needed medical care in an attempt to prevent him from testifying in the death penalty phase of a murder trial. In another case, Sholinsky reached a settlement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a gay prisoner – placed in a unit for those preparing to be transitioned back into society – when prison officials ignored his pleas for help, leading to repeated harassment and a severe beating by other inmates that resulted in his hospitalization for broken bones and multiple lacerations.

Sholinsky has been a pro bono leader on issues involving immigration, asylum, and citizenship. He is a longstanding member of the board of directors and is currently a Vice President of HIAS Pennsylvania, which provides legal services to low-income immigrants, advocating for their equitable inclusion in American society. In addition to handling his own cases for refugees seeking asylum and legal immigration status, Sholinsky has assisted many of Schnader's summer associates in representing individuals seeking citizenship, helping these clients with their applications, medical and language waivers, and interviews with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

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

A: I am representing a Pakistani Christian in an asylum case. He fled due to religious discrimination when his nephew was murdered and he was beaten. In addition, as part of a nationwide project of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, I am seeking compassionate release for an elderly prisoner with severe medical issues – threatening his life due to rampant Covid in the prison – whose wife is dying of cancer.

Q: How have your pro bono cases inspired you?

A: Pro bono work gives a commercial litigator like me the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities in need. It's a great way to utilize our legal training, stretch beyond our normal practice, and fulfill the values of justice that first attracted us to the law. I've learned that even when I don't "win" the case, giving a disadvantaged person some control and the opportunity to be heard is inspiring.

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

A: Schnader encourages and strongly supports us to engage in pro bono work and help others who cannot afford a lawyer. It is so rewarding to know that these clients trust you to help them protect their essential rights, and their deep appreciation remains fulfilling long after the case is closed. Find an hour today and get involved.