

## **Pro Bono**

### **Kasia Szymborski**

One of the big reasons I chose Patterson Belknap was because of its commitment to pro bono. I found when I started that that wasn't just lip service or a PR tool, but Patterson Belknap's commitment is very real and genuine. And on every associate's first day, they're assigned a pro bono case. And since I started, I've worked on many pro bono cases. For example, I was on a team at Patterson that represented homeless youth in New York City in a class action against the City for failure to provide shelter for any homeless youth in the city who seeks it. And I also oversee the Firm's state clemency project on which the Firm is partnering with the New York County Lawyers Association or NYCLA. In this project, we assist nonviolent offenders incarcerated by New York State in filing petitions for executive clemency.

In fact, the Firm has I think now it's seven projects like that, which I think is very special because it really shows that at an organizational level, the Firm wants to make sure that nobody has trouble finding a pro bono case. For example, we also have a project in which attorneys can represent children bringing claims under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. And all of these projects are great because through these partnerships, we are funneled meritorious cases for our lawyers to work on. I've also had the opportunity to work on several amicus briefs at the Supreme Court on various issues that I'm passionate about.

For example, I worked on one in the case, *Glossip v. Gross*, which challenged the constitutionality of Oklahoma's three drug protocol for executions. I also worked on another one in *Evenwel v. Abbott*, which was a case that considered the meaning of one person, one vote. And most recently, I got to work on one in *U.S. v. Welch* regarding retroactivity of the court's previous invalidation of a clause of the Armed Career Criminal Act. So, it's been varied and very interesting. And it's an opportunity to explore and develop your passions, because I think all of us, while we enjoy the work that we have on the billable side and find it challenging and interesting, I think for many of us we have passions within the law that are difficult to explore in corporate matters.

I believe that as attorneys, we have a responsibility to help those with fewer resources navigate the system and protect their rights. And the Firm is also very open to associates bringing in their own pro bono projects. I've had several people approach me. For example, I had a friend at the Innocence Project who approached me about a case that they needed help on and the Firm took it on. The Firm solicits ideas for new pro bono cases or new pro bono programs, and they also tried to take on cases that match up with the interests and passions of the attorneys here.