



JUNE 11, 2024

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:00 NOON ON JUNE 11, 2024**

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**D.C. Access to Justice Commission Honors Firms that Qualified for the 2023 Raising the Bar in D.C. Leadership Circle**

*Recognized firms donated \$6.6 million during 2023 to local legal services organizations that serve D.C. residents in critical legal areas. Financial support for civil legal aid from the private sector remains critical as D.C. residents continue to face urgent civil justice problems, and incentivizes public support for civil legal aid.*

Washington, D.C. – The D.C. Access to Justice Commission is pleased to honor the 39 firms that qualified for the Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign in 2023. Honored firms are being recognized for donating a benchmark percentage of D.C. office revenue to local legal services organizations during the course of 2023.

Together, the honored firms donated \$6.6 million in 2023 to organizations that serve low- and moderate-income District residents facing life-altering legal needs, keeping them in their homes, with their families, and safely within their communities. The demand for these services continues to grow, as does the cost of offering these services due to rising operational expenses.

Among the core missions of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission is to encourage funding for local civil legal services. The Commission's signature effort around private funding is the Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign, which recognizes financial support provided by area law firms to local legal services organizations. The Commission launched the Campaign in 2010 to set a standard for area law firms to aspire to when giving to civil legal services organizations, and recognized its first set of Leadership Circle firms in 2011.

The Campaign recognizes firms at three levels – Platinum, Gold and Silver – for donating .11%, .09%, or .075% of D.C. office revenue, respectively. Because of the structure of the Campaign, firms of all sizes have the opportunity to and do participate, and firms must increase their giving when their revenues increase to qualify for each level of giving. Since the Campaign began, the number of participating firms has grown substantially from the initial twenty-three, and aggregate giving has increased more than \$3.5 million. This is a powerful

statement of the commitment across the District’s private bar to ensuring that every individual, regardless of income, has equal access to justice.

“The leadership of D.C. law firms is crucial in helping guarantee access to justice in the District,” said Peter B. Edelman, Chair of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission. “These essential funds directly support D.C. legal services organizations that ensure that thousands of District residents have access to free, expert legal help. These services are a critical safety net that keep residents in their homes, preserves their incomes, supports youth, and protects them against violence, abuse, and fraud. These legal services make our communities stronger.” Added James J. Sandman, Vice Chair of the D.C. Access to Justice Commission, “The increasing cost of living, economic stressors, and lingering social and economic effects from the pandemic continue to exact a disproportionate toll on the District’s low-income communities – and make legal services more expensive to provide. Legal services create opportunity, but demand remains higher than supply and is still growing, especially for help with housing and domestic violence, among other areas.”

Giving by the private bar through the Campaign complements and incentivizes the D.C. government’s public appropriation for legal services through the Access to Justice Initiative. It also reflects the private bar’s confidence in the strength of the work of the local legal services community and robust partnerships between firms and legal services providers. “The enduring commitment of D.C. law firms to supporting our civil justice system has resulted in a robust public-private partnership, and we will continue to work together toward ensuring all D.C. residents, regardless of income, have access to justice,” said Chair Edelman.

The Commission is gratified that the Campaign recognizes two additional firms who were not in the 2022 Leadership Circle, including one firm whose participation had briefly lapsed and one new firm, Seyfarth Shaw LLP. We also extend special thanks to the twenty-nine firms that were able to sustain their level of giving from the previous year – including sixteen firms that have now maintained giving at the highest Platinum level for three consecutive years – and two firms that increased their giving level in 2023.

In its letter congratulating Leadership Circle firms, the Commission urged each firm to redouble its efforts to provide leadership and financial support in the face of chronic and growing need for legal services:

*Your support has furthered access to justice for countless of the District’s most vulnerable residents. It ensures that our low-income neighbors have access to free, expert legal help when facing life-altering events such as eviction, domestic violence, the loss of public benefits, and consumer fraud – and keeps them in their homes, with their families, and safely within their communities.*

The list of firms and their levels follows.

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**RAISING THE BAR IN D.C.  
A FUNDING CAMPAIGN FOR LEGAL SERVICES**

**SPONSORED BY THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION**

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**LEADERSHIP CIRCLE 2023**

**PLATINUM LEVEL DONORS**



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