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Simpson Thacher, ACLU and Others Obtain Preliminary Injunction in Case Concerning Placement of Ten Commandments in Louisiana Schools

Simpson Thacher, alongside the ACLU, ACLU of Louisiana, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, secured a victory when a federal district court determined that a Louisiana law requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in schools violates the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Enacted last June, Louisiana's H.B. 71 requires that all public schools permanently display a government-approved, denominational version of the Ten Commandments in every classroom in every public school in the state.

In his November 12, 2024 decision in *Rev. Roake v. Brumley*, Judge John W. deGravelles issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting implementation of the law and noted that "...Plaintiffs will endure considerable hardship if the Court delays a decision—specifically, a violation of their First Amendment rights." Judge deGravelles also recognized that H.B. 71 would lead to unconstitutional religious coercion of the children-plaintiffs in the case by imposing religious doctrine on them for nearly every hour of the school day, throughout their entire public-school education. The court further ruled that H.B. 71 also violates the plaintiffs' rights under the Free Exercise Clause. The injunction is effective immediately.

The lawsuit was filed on June 24, 2024 on behalf of a multi-faith group of Louisiana families with children in public schools and alleged that the display was religiously coercive. Oral arguments took place on October 21, 2024. The Simpson Thacher team included Partner **Jonathan Youngwood**, Senior Counsel **Janet Gochman** and Associates **Nicholas Prendergast**, **Jordan Krieger**, **Noah Gimbel** and **Lara Fishbane**.

The Firm Hosts Call Center for Ninth Season of Election Protection

On November 4 and 5, the Firm hosted a two-day Call Center for the nonpartisan Election Protection (EP) Hotline (866-OUR-VOTE), which is managed and operated by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. The Firm has been an integral part of this program since 2004 and has supported call centers for nine different election cycles. This year, 160 Simpson Thacher volunteers, corporate clients, alumni, and others assisted voters in Georgia to help them ensure their votes were counted and to report issues at the polls. Between November 4 and 5, over 22,000 tickets were created from callers from every state in the country. Over 4,000 hotline shifts were filled by 3,000+ unique volunteers. In Georgia, our teams fielded about 1,000 calls including reports of bomb threats at polling locations, systemic registration delays for newly naturalized citizens, and mail delays for ballot delivery.



We thank the many volunteers from Simpson Thacher, our alumni, and clients from Pfizer, Paramount, Morgan Stanley, TD Bank and Blackstone. The Program was led by Chief Pro Bono Counsel **Harlene Katzman**, Partners **John Ericson**, **John Bennett**¹, Counsel **Kevin Roe**, and Pro Bono Attorneys **Nihara Choudhri** and **Nadine Mompremier**. Additional Simpson Thacher attorneys in Captain roles included Partner **Meredith Dodd**², Senior Counsel **Maura Whelan**, Associates **Kelsey Vickery** and **Alex Vasques** and Senior Paralegal **Emily Soule**.

Simpson Thacher and NYCLU Secure Win in Suit Against the New York State DOCCS Over Release of Prison Staff Misconduct Records

On October 7, 2024, Simpson Thacher and the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) secured a significant settlement in a lawsuit against the New York State Department of Corrections and

Community Supervision (DOCCS), with the DOCCS agreeing to turn over thousands of withheld corrections staff disciplinary records authorized to be disclosed following the repeal of Civil Rights Law § 50-a. Filed in 2023, the lawsuit claimed that DOCCS unlawfully denied in part NYCLU's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request seeking records relating to alleged misconduct by DOCCS' corrections and parole officers. NYCLU submitted a FOIL request on October 16, 2020 seeking public records specifically authorized to be disclosed under state FOIL after New York's repeal of Civil Rights Law § 50-a, a statute that had been used for decades to bar the disclosure of misconduct by law enforcement. With this recent settlement, the DOCCS has agreed to turn over records, including a database summarizing tens of thousands of investigations with officer names unredacted. The Simpson Thacher team included Partners **Linton Mann III** and **Alison Sher**³, **Nicole Palmadesso**, **Kelsey Vickery** and **Hayley McLaughlin**.

Simpson Thacher Secures Asylum in the United States for 14 Afghan Evacuees

Simpson Thacher successfully secured asylum in the United States for 14 Afghan citizens who had been evacuated from Kabul under harrowing conditions in 2021 when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. As part of two coalitions of law firms representing Afghan citizens, Simpson Thacher lawyers took on the representation of a reporter covering Afghanistan for *The New York Times* and seven of his adult family members, in addition to six female students from the Asian



¹ Partner effective January 1, 2025

² Partner effective January 1, 2025

³ Partner effective January 1, 2025

University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh who were studying in Kabul, all of whom feared targeted persecution from the Taliban. Filing several asylum applications and with a number of lawyers from the Firm working to obtain legal status in the United States for the 14 individuals, the Firm has successfully obtained asylum status for the entire group—obtaining legal status for the six Afghan women in October 2023 and securing asylum more recently for the Afghan journalist and his family in October 2024.

The Simpson Thacher team who assisted *The New York Times* family included Partners **Mark Brod**, **John Ericson** and **Kristy Fields**⁴, Senior Counsel **Beate Krieger**, Chief Pro Bono Counsel **Harlene Katzman** and Associates **Nicholas Cunha**, **Lena Dennington**, **Andrew Mandelbaum**, **Suzannah Ranzo**, **Albert Tagliaferri** and **Clark Vaughn**. The Simpson Thacher team who assisted the AUW students included Partners **Vanessa Burrows**, **Alan Turner** and **Robert Vogel**⁵, Counsel **Iram Huq**⁶, Chief Pro Bono Counsel **Harlene Katzman** and Associates **Shuhao Fan**, **Yonah Goldschmidt**, **Anna Jarman**, **Jacob Kornman**, **Belinda Li**, **Albert Murzakhanov**, **Michael Palizkar**, **Emily Rosenthal**, **Jessica Shieh**, **Natalie Wembolua** and **Megan Whitman**.



John Ericson, Harlene Katzman and Beate Krieger celebrated by *The New York Times* for the Firm's work on behalf of its Afghan journalist and his family.

Simpson Thacher and ACLU of Mississippi Secure Win Following Trial in First Amendment Case Regarding Permitting Policies in Oxford, Mississippi

On September 30, 2024, Simpson Thacher and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Mississippi secured a significant win in *Rash v. Lafayette County*, when the Court ruled that a curfew in Lafayette County, Mississippi's permitting policy, "...is an unconstitutional restriction on speech under the First Amendment," and that "the loss of First Amendment rights constitutes irreparable injury justifying the grant of a permanent injunction." Filed in July 2020 on behalf of documentary filmmaker, photographer, visual artist and educator, John Rash, against Lafayette County, Mississippi, the lawsuit sought to vindicate Mr. Rash's First Amendment right to freedom of speech and to invalidate Lafayette County's unconstitutional policies that govern the use of the Lafayette County Courthouse grounds, and the neighboring confederate monument. Mr. Rash sought to hold a community art event that would project images onto the walls of the Courthouse at night. Lafayette County denied his permit after enacting a curfew closing the grounds entirely from 30 minutes before dusk till dawn. The County enacted this and many other restrictions during the summer of 2020 in response to protests that erupted across the country including in Oxford and Lafayette County after the murder of George Floyd. The Simpson Thacher team included Partner **Jonathan Youngwood**, Senior Counsel **Janet Gochman** and Associate **Alison Draikiwicz**. **Isaac Rethy** also played a critical role over the course of this case.



4 Partner effective January 1, 2025
5 Partner effective January 1, 2025
6 Partner effective January 1, 2025

Simpson Thacher and ACLU File Suit Challenging Tennessee New Bail Law in Tennessee

The Firm and co-counsel ACLU and ACLU of Tennessee filed suit on behalf of criminal justice advocacy group, Just City, to challenge H.B. 1719, a recently enacted law which says judges can't consider a defendant's ability to pay when setting bail. The law was passed by the Tennessee Legislature as a direct response to a bail system reform implemented in the Memphis area which explicitly requires judges and judicial commissioners to consider the arrestee's ability to pay. The complaint argues that the new state law violates the due process clause in the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution because it renders bail proceedings fundamentally unfair and leads to wealth-based detention of arrestees who are detained because they are unable to pay the amount of bail set. The Simpson Thacher team includes Partner **Craig Waldman**, Senior Counsel **David Elbaum** and Associates **Daniel Lutfy** and **Jared Quigley**.

Washington Lawyers Help Local Nonprofits Through Compass Pro Bono

Washington Office lawyers have been paired with Washington area nonprofits to collaborate with a team of consultants to provide in-depth, strategic guidance and thought partnership on a complex business challenges. The nonprofits served range from the Anne Frank House to a D.C. Youth Orchestra to a Homeless Children's Playtime Project. The Simpson Thacher attorneys who have participated include Partners **David Greene** and **Katharine Thompson** and Associates **Allison Davido**, **Amy Donofrio**, **Oluwatoyin Edogun**, **David Jennings**, **Liam Murray**, **Brice Stewart** and **Kuai Yu**.

Simpson Thacher, ACLU, ACLU of Mississippi and SPLC Complete Trial in Challenge to Mississippi High Court Districts That Dilute Black Votes

Simpson Thacher, the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Mississippi and Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) filed a lawsuit in 2022 on behalf of individual Black civic leaders in Mississippi. The complaint challenged state Supreme Court district lines that have gone unchanged for more than 35 years because those lines dilute the voting strength of Black residents in state Supreme Court elections, in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the U.S. Constitution. In August, the Firm completed an eight-day trial in Mississippi which included testimony from 13 plaintiffs, seven fact witnesses, and six expert witnesses. Plaintiffs seek to have the districts redrawn so that Black voters have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. As it stands, none of the three Supreme Court districts are drawn with a Black voting age majority, but current District 1, which includes Jackson and part of the Mississippi Delta, could readily be redrawn to have a majority of eligible Black voters. The Simpson Thacher team included Partner **Jonathan Youngwood**, Senior Counsel **Janet Gochman** and Associates **Noah Gimbel** and **Kate Lambroza**. **Isaac Rethy** also played a critical role over the course of this case.



Jon Youngwood, Noah Gimbel and members of the team from ACLU and SPLC outside the courthouse in Mississippi



Simpson Thacher Professional Staff Catalog and Organize Backlog of Almost 2,500 Letters From Prisoners and Families for the Promise of Justice Initiative

The Promise of Justice Initiative (PJI), a New Orleans-based organization providing legal services to those touched by the criminal legal system and advocating for an end to mass incarceration, engaged Simpson Thacher to help develop a database documenting a backlog of almost 2,500 letters from prisoners and families seeking legal services. In addition, volunteers reviewed and tagged the letters to help develop fact patterns for potential future litigation by PJI with particular focus on denied medical care, lack of disability accommodations, and forced labor issues. The project was overseen by Washington Senior Litigation Paralegal **Emily Soule** and volunteers included over 40 staff attorneys, paralegals, and assistants across five offices and multiple practice groups, including, in particular, **Donna Akinrele, Crystel Alvarez, Nancy Anderson, Daphne Aronson, John Bales, Kelly Banks, Sofia Bazdekis, Devon Berman, Avery Bowen, Loriann Branda, Ryann Brown, Eboni Carter, Stacy Castillo, Amy Cohen, Stephanie Crosskey, Jason D'Ambrosio, Ariana Drusine-Stokes, Hebah Elaiwat, Tammy Gershoni, Danielle Hagan, Noah Hale, William Harmon, Doug Henderson, Lishomwa Henry, Karimah Janneh, Lisa Johnson, Daniel Knapp, Scott Kraemer, Vanessa Lewis, Mary Margaret Anderson, Matthew McKenna, Jason Mull, Andrea Parisi, Michele Phelps, Maria Schense, Nicole Schubert, Rosio Surugui, Liliana Taub, Perri Thaler and Samer Yahyawi.**



Clinic Roundup

Washington Office Volunteers Prepare Certificate of Pardon Applications for Individuals with Convictions for Simple Possession and Use of Marijuana

On Monday, October 21, Simpson Thacher partnered with Legal Aid DC to help clear the records of individuals convicted of simple marijuana possession and use in D.C. and federal courts. President Biden has [issued proclamations](#) pardoning individuals convicted of these marijuana offenses, reasoning that these convictions “have imposed needless barriers to employment, housing, and educational opportunities.” These individuals may nonetheless need proof in the form of a Certificate of Pardon to achieve the full benefits of the pardon. As Legal Aid DC’s Executive Director Vikram Swaruup explained, President Biden’s proclamations are a *promise* of justice for these individuals—but that promise will only become a reality with the help of pro bono volunteers who are willing to help individuals navigate the application process for a Certificate of Pardon.

The event featured opening remarks by White House Counsel Ed Siskel, who expressed tremendous gratitude for the efforts of pro bono volunteers. Simpson Thacher Partner **Sara Razi** oversaw this clinic. The Simpson Thacher volunteers included Associates **Toyin Edogun, Celeste Fleetwood, Robert Hesni, Nicole Palmadesso** and **Samantha Sergent**, Pro Bono Attorney **Nihara Choudhri** and Pro Bono Specialist **Michelle Lopez**.



Simpson Thacher and Legal Aid DC volunteers

Simpson Thacher Secures Five Anti-Eviction Grants for Pro Bono Clients

As part of Simpson Thacher's 2024 Summer Program, summer associates took part in the Firm's pro bono "One Shot Deal" clinic, in partnership with Legal Services NYC (LSNYC). Through the clinic, the teams of Simpson Thacher attorneys and summer associates secured approval for all five anti-eviction grant applications they submitted. These grants will allow individuals to cover their rent arrears, thus preventing evictions and ensuring that they can remain in their homes.



Simpson Thacher Hosts Two Virtual Pardon Clinics Serving 20 Applicants

This fall, Simpson Thacher hosted two pardon clinics in partnership with the Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity, one on October 25 with Pfizer and another on November 13 with Hilton. Together, volunteers served 20 applicants who have completed their sentences for past crimes. During the clinics, volunteers met virtually with their assigned pardon applicants for an initial meeting. In the weeks following the clinics, volunteer teams met with their applicants one or two more times to obtain the necessary details to draft a personal statement and complete the pardon application. This project provides volunteers with a high-impact opportunity to hear the story of an individual with a criminal record and to help change the course of their life. The Simpson Thacher volunteers for the clinics included: Partner **Meredith Dodd**, Counsel **Lina Zhou**, Associates **Sungjoo Ahn**, **Surya Banerjee**, **Ben Bogard**, **Tenzin Dolkar**, **Alan Fenyes**, **Christopher Flynn**, **Nicolle**

Heagney, **Anna Heitmann**, **Dave Holmes**, **Kayley Ingalls-Rose**, **Noor Irshaidat**, **Alice Ko**, **Anilya Krishnan**, **Rebecca O'Neill**, **Kimberly Jacobs**, **Seya Lewis-Meeks**, **Hannah Plaziak**, **Leena Sanka**, **Samantha Sergeant**, **Lynnewood (Jeff) Shafer**, **Mickey Tarpinian**, **Jim Wheeler** and **Khalia Williams and Paralegal Santiago Valenzuela**.

Celebrating Veteran's Day by Helping Veterans Secure Legal Services

Simpson Thacher is committed to giving back to veterans through its pro bono work. Several times a year, attorneys partner with LevittQuinn, an LA-based Nonprofit Family Law Center, to support its Pro Bono Clinic, which aims to educate veterans about their legal rights and responsibilities in family law matters such as divorce, spousal and child support, custody, visitation and marital property, among others. Volunteers at the clinic speak with participants to understand their legal issues, conduct an initial case assessment and develop personalized legal plans and referral packets for clinic participants. LevittQuinn, in partnership with the LACBA Veterans Legal Service Project, offers a variety of free legal services to veterans, reservists and active-duty personnel.

In addition, Simpson Thacher also partners with the Veterans Legal Justice (VLJ), a New Hampshire-based nonprofit dedicated to providing pro bono legal services to veterans and their families. Volunteers from the Firm conduct intake screening interviews, which allows us to understand each veteran's legal issues and ensure they receive the right legal support.



Awards, Events and Mentions

Pro Bono Attorney Nihara Choudhri Attends White House-Sponsored Pro Bono Week Event

On Tuesday, October 24, 2024, Pro Bono Attorney **Nihara Choudhri** attended the Pro Bono Week Convening sponsored by the Racial Justice & Equity Team of the Office of White House Counsel. Held in the Indian Treaty Room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, this invitation-only gathering featured White House legal and policy staff who highlighted recent efforts to expand the rights of LGBTQI+ Americans, strengthen democracy, curb gun violence and expand access to justice. Guests included selected representatives from legal services organizations and pro bono professionals who engaged in roundtable discussions on innovative ways to promote pro bono work in these areas.



Nihara Choudhri with Vikram Swaruup, Executive Director of Legal Aid DC

London Office Competes in Tour de Law to Raise Money for Treatment and Prevention of Breast Cancer

In October, the London Office took part in Tour de Law for the organization, Breast Cancer Now. Tour de Law encourages prominent London law offices to compete for time and distance in a cycling event on stationary bikes. The race took place in the offices of the law firms over a two-day period. This year, a total of 33 Simpson Thacher participants cycled a total distance of 604.92km

(approximately the distance from London to Cardiff and back again) and helped to raise £10,496.00. Although the Simpson team did not reach the top of the leaderboard, they put in an admirable effort and ranked in the top 20 law firms in the city for distance and donations. Breast Cancer Now supports patients and families that are affected by the devastating disease and the money raised through this event will be used to pay for a 2-year research project to find new ways to prevent and treat breast cancer.



Partner Adam Brunk and DEI Lead Hennie Young



Associate Tom Lort



Paralegals Beste Bektas and Rachel Fung and supporters

Simpson Thacher Runs Successful Back to School Supplies Drive for the New York Common Pantry

The Firm's summer back to school supplies drive yielded 673 items, including notebooks, pens, pencils, folders, art supplies, calculators and more. These items will benefit the communities served by the organization, including those who face hunger, food insecurity and homelessness in New York City.

Together with other corporate, volunteer, and individual donors, New York Common Pantry distributed 112 backpacks full of supplies to 92 different families. Volunteers who organized the drive were led by **Alison Melaugh** and included **Andrew Bellomo, Trina Gregory, Lorna Haughton, Nicole Heagney, Jose Medina, Mehall Moloney, Kris Ramsarran, Andrew Tiburcio** and **Parker White**. We thank all of the Simpson Thacher colleagues in the New York office who generously donated to the effort.



Please send
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or suggestions regarding
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