



PRO BONO

Spotlight on Recent Successes

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Desmarais LLP is committed to serving the community through pro bono representation. We partner with organizations such as the Veterans Consortium, Immigration Equality, and the Southern District of New York Pro Se Clerk's Office to represent individuals who do not have access to legal counsel.

Desmarais LLP's flexible and innovative approach to time management encourages attorneys to take on pro bono matters. Because Desmarais LLP does not bill any of its client by the hour, our attorneys can represent pro bono clients without worrying about the artificial distinction between billable work and non-billable work.

Attorneys and paralegals who make a substantial contribution to our pro bono efforts are recognized at a celebration at the end of the year as part of the firm's Pro Bono Challenge. In 2019, Desmarais LLP attorneys contributed over 1,400 hours to pro bono matters. Below is a sample of our recent successes.

Disability Benefits Obtained for Veteran

Desmarais LLP obtained a pro bono victory on behalf of an honorably discharged veteran in a dispute with the US Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA"). The VA denied our client's claim for disability connected to his service in the Army and Navy, which he appealed to the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. The firm convinced the VA to reopen proceedings. As a result, the CAVC remanded our client's claim back to the VA. We then convinced the Board of Veterans Appeals to grant service connection for our client's hearing loss and tinnitus. We also successfully argued for attorneys' fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act, which we donated to the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program.

Asylum Secured for Victim of Persecution

Desmarais LLP secured asylum on behalf of a trans woman who suffered years of violent persecution in her country of origin. After missing the deadline to apply for asylum, she came to the firm for help. We represented her throughout the application process, which involved drafting a detailed personal statement, compiling evidence of persecution, and attending an in-person interview at the office of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Our client can now live freely and safely in the United States.

Victory for Pro Bono Client in Business Dispute

Desmarais LLP won a summary judgment motion in the Southern District of New York in favor of a pro bono client who did not have the resources to secure representation. At the request of the Court, the firm represented the defendant in a lawsuit between two former business partners. After researching the plaintiff's theories and conducting fact discovery from beginning to end, the firm convinced the Court that it did not have subject matter jurisdiction over the claims.

Settlement Secured in Prisoners' Rights Litigation

Desmarais LLP secured a favorable settlement for a prisoner at the Fishkill Correctional Facility. The prisoner had sued three New York prison administrators, alleging violations of his Eighth Amendment rights after he was forced to wear the same clothes for over sixty days in a row. We began representing him following summary judgment and prepared for trial. After successfully reopening discovery, the firm favorably deposed two prison administrators. Shortly thereafter, the prison settled.