DEAR FRIENDS OF LEGAL AID

Legal Aid turned 85 this year. Your support has built Legal Aid into the District’s largest general civil legal services program. Thanks to you, in 2017 we set fundraising records with both our Servant of Justice Awards Dinner and our Generous Associates Campaign. But what has that meant for our neighbors in need?

For Alesia Mainasara, pictured on the cover, it meant that she and her two children kept their home and won badly-needed repairs in thier moldy, insect-infested apartment. William Henderson obtained the unemployment benefits he needed to care for his family until he got his job back. Anna Jones* fought back against her abuser and secured protection for her daughter and herself. Alba and Wilmar Funes saved their home from foreclosure after a scammer stole more than $50,000 from them.

In all, your support provided full representation for some 1,500 clients like Ms. Mainasara, Mr. Henderson, Ms. Jones, and Mr. and Mrs. Funes. Thousands of District residents kept their homes, reached safety from domestic violence, secured the public benefits they needed, and more because they had a Legal Aid—or pro bono—lawyer by their side. And thousands more benefited from Legal Aid’s systemic advocacy, which you will read more about in the following pages.

Legal Aid is fortunate to be able to count on a wonderful base of private supporters to drive our mission. But that means as we continue to grow, sustaining and increasing your commitment to Legal Aid is more important than ever. And if you’ve never given before, think about how many more people we can help if you join us.

We’ve helped tens of thousands of people in our 85 years. However, even as we celebrate this milestone, this anniversary is just as much about looking forward as it is about celebrating our legacy. Every investment in Legal Aid, no matter the size, means that more people living in poverty in the District will get the legal assistance they need. On behalf of everyone at Legal Aid, and especially our clients, thank you for MAKING JUSTICE REAL now, and for the years to come.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Klein
President,
Board of Trustees
Mayer Brown

Eric S. Angel
Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

*Throughout this report, names marked with asterisks have been changed.
STRENGTHENING THE SAFETY NET

William Henderson is the sole breadwinner for his family. He supports his wife and three children, as well as a family friend (who is blind) and her baby. He worked as a mechanic for the D.C. government, but was fired after losing his driver’s license. He had lent his car to a friend who racked up parking tickets in Mr. Henderson’s name.

After he was fired, Mr. Henderson applied for unemployment benefits, but his application was denied. To make matters worse, he never received his notice of appeal rights, and, after getting the run around from the District unemployment agency, he filed his appeal a day late. Legal Aid public benefits attorneys Drake Hagner and Jennifer Mezey took on his case.

Drake learned that not only was Mr. Henderson never notified of his appeal rights, but he had to rush his wife to the doctor on the day that his appeal was due. We filed a Motion for Reconsideration and secured a new hearing date. This time, with help from the AFL-CIO, Mr. Henderson was successful, and he got the unemployment benefits to which he was entitled.

And even better, with help from his union, Mr. Henderson successfully challenged his job termination and has now returned to work. The unemployment benefits served their purpose by helping his family make ends meet during a vulnerable time until Mr. Henderson was able to get his job back. As Mr. Henderson told us, “I’m just your living witness that the program works, and you guys are really doing what you set out to do.”
It was the worst three years ever.”

Mariana Garcia’s now three-year-old son, Antonio*, was born six weeks premature. He has developmental delays and a chronic respiratory illness that requires nearly monthly hospitalizations. Ms. Garcia, a native Spanish-speaker who was working two jobs before Antonio was born, had to cut back her hours to care for her son, even as she faced significant medical bills.

Despite Antonio’s serious medical conditions, the Social Security Administration (SSA) denied his disability benefits application. Legal Aid public benefits attorney Hannah Weinberger-Beder represented Ms. Garcia and her son at an administrative hearing and established that Antonio’s condition was severe enough to qualify him for benefits. Then, after Antonio was approved, Hannah discovered that SSA had underpaid Ms. Garcia because it had miscalculated her income. With Legal Aid’s help, Antonio was awarded the amount of benefits to which he is legally entitled.

Navigating the byzantine Social Security system, establishing disability, and ensuring that beneficiaries get the correct amount of benefits can be difficult, if not impossible, without experienced legal representation.

At the same time, with so much going on in her life, Ms. Garcia missed a single month’s rent payment shortly after Antonio’s premature birth. Instead of working with Ms. Garcia, her landlord tried to evict her. Fortunately, Legal Aid was there. Housing attorney Elena Bowers investigated, ultimately filing a counterclaim based on a severe bedbug infestation in Ms. Garcia’s apartment that was particularly dangerous given Antonio’s health condition. Ms. Garcia’s landlord agreed to a fair payment plan and to remedy the bedbug infestation.

With their benefits and home secured, Ms. Garcia has time to work, care for Antonio, and study for her nursing degree. Ms. Garcia said, “It’s a relief, and I was so happy, because we didn’t give up.”
APPELLATE & SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

Making justice real in systemic ways is a core part of Legal Aid’s mission. We do so through regulatory, legislative, and court reform advocacy, and through our nationally-recognized Barbara McDowell Appellate Advocacy Project.

EMPOWERING UNREPRESENTED LITIGANTS

In Landlord and Tenant Court, while 95% of landlords have attorneys, fewer than 10% of tenants are represented. Without attorneys, tenants can lose their homes unnecessarily because of procedural missteps. In both Wylie v. Glenncrest and Smith v. Conway, Legal Aid helped secure important precedents for unrepresented litigants. D.C.’s highest court ruled that judges have broad latitude in addressing the pleadings of unrepresented litigants, and that they have a special duty to conduct a meaningful inquiry when an individual does not have a lawyer. For example, the judge in Wylie v. Glenncrest did not give the unrepresented Ms. Wylie a chance to explain why it had taken her three months to file a motion in her eviction case. In fact, she had given birth prematurely, and her child was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Now, future tenants in Ms. Wylie’s situation will be able to point to this ruling as binding precedent.

REPAIRING A HOLE IN THE DISTRICT’S SAFETY NET

Working as part of a broad coalition, Legal Aid advocated to eliminate reductions and benefit cut-offs in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which would have impacted 13,000 D.C. children and their families. Thanks to the coalition’s advocacy, eligible families will receive full benefits (typically about $500 per month) regardless of how long they have participated in the program—eliminating the so-called “TANF Cliff.” By preventing families who lose benefits from becoming homeless, the new policy could even save the District money.

BATTLEGROSS SEXISM IN FAMILY LAW

When Renee Melbourne took her daughter (who had her father’s last name, Taylor) to a new daycare center, a childcare worker mistakenly recorded Ms. Melbourne’s name as “Ms. Taylor.” Later, when she went to pick her daughter up, she was initially prevented from doing so because her identification did not match. Despite this, when Ms. Melbourne tried to change her daughter’s last name, a family court judge refused to consider any argument about the best interests of Ms. Melbourne’s daughter, and he denied Ms. Melbourne’s name change request by citing a decades-old case and anachronistic gender-based assumptions about a father’s relationship with his child. In Melbourne v. Taylor, Legal Aid filed an amicus brief that helped overturn this decision, with D.C.’s highest court ruling in powerful language that a gender-neutral, “best interests of the child” standard must be applied in all future cases.

KEEPING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AFFORDABLE

In recent years, D.C. has seen a dramatic decrease in affordable housing. One culprit—rising rents in rent-controlled units through increases permitted on both a yearly basis and when tenants move. Legal Aid testified before the D.C. Council in support of the Rental Housing Affordability Stabilization Amendment Act of 2017. The bill would significantly limit these rent increases.
Donna Williams is a single, working mother with a 16-year-old daughter. After saving for many years, she was able to buy a home in Congress Heights. On the very night of the closing, Ms. Williams and her daughter were so overjoyed they slept on the floor of their new, not-yet-furnished home.

Unfortunately, Ms. Williams fell behind on her mortgage payments when a blood clot left her with unforeseen medical expenses. She eventually hired a law firm that promised to help her avoid foreclosure, including through litigation. But when her lender filed a foreclosure action, her lawyers failed to appear in court or do anything to defend her case.

One day, a stranger came to Ms. Williams’ door and informed her that he had purchased her home at a foreclosure auction. She soon learned that the sale had occurred after a default judgment was entered against her in the foreclosure case. The law firm she had retained, and been paying for a year, had wholly failed her.

Ms. Williams came to Legal Aid for help. First, Legal Aid prevented Ms. Williams from being forced out of her home by the auction purchaser. Next, consumer law attorney Jennifer Lavallee successfully argued that Ms. Williams had never been properly served in the case. The judge agreed, vacating the default judgment and reversing the foreclosure sale. Legal Aid then helped Ms. Williams secure a loan modification that lowered her interest rate and brought her mortgage to current status.

Finally, Legal Aid volunteer staff attorney Tom Papson and pro bono attorney and former Servant of Justice Awards honoree Andy Marks helped Ms. Williams bring a malpractice action against her previous lawyers. That matter has since settled, and Ms. Williams and her daughter can again enjoy peace of mind about the place they so proudly call home.

“

You buy your home. You own your home. You don’t want to lose your home.”

DONNA WILLIAMS

PREVENTING FORECLOSURES

4 | MAKING JUSTICE REAL
The story of the foreclosure crisis in the U.S. is long and complex, but one consistent theme is the role of scammers preying on the vulnerable.

Alba and Wilmar Funes, both monolingual Spanish-speakers, had owned their home for more than a decade, raising three sons and a daughter there. Several years ago, they were approached by a scammer who offered to help them obtain a loan modification, paying him $6,000 up front. The scammer then told Mr. and Mrs. Funes that he had indeed secured the loan modification and began sending them monthly “statements.” Mr. and Mrs. Funes conscientiously paid the scammer every month for three years—more than $50,000 in all—believing he was forwarding their money to their lender.

When Mr. and Mrs. Funes were sued for foreclosure, the scammer assured them everything was fine. By the time they realized that something was amiss, a default judgment had already been entered, making a foreclosure sale imminent.

Mr. and Mrs. Funes met with Legal Aid consumer law attorney (and fluent Spanish speaker) Jenny Joseph when they went to court for the first time. Jenny successfully argued that the judgment should be vacated because of the fraud that had been committed against Mr. and Mrs. Funes. Legal Aid then helped them obtain a loan modification that enabled them to bring their mortgage current and make affordable monthly payments going forward.

As for the scammer—he was arrested in another jurisdiction and is facing criminal charges. But even as that matter remains pending, Mr. and Mrs. Funes have already found solace in the resolution of their civil foreclosure case, telling us, “We’re just happy we’ll be able to live in our home and keep our home because of Jenny.”

“We were so worried about losing the house we had lived in for 18 years. We were so relieved when we won.”
HELPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS REACH SAFETY

Anna Jones* was terrified of her child’s father, Garrett Lewis.* Over the years, when he got angry, he would hit, scratch, and even choke her. The violence continued during Ms. Jones’ pregnancy. Ms. Jones finally summoned up the courage to escape with their one-year-old daughter but lived in fear that Mr. Lewis would find them. Her fear was justified. One day she arrived at her parents’ home in Virginia to find Mr. Lewis waiting outside. He grabbed her arm and threatened her. That was when Ms. Jones decided to seek protection from the courts. Ms. Jones went to a Domestic Violence Intake Center and met with Legal Aid attorney Jamie Sparano.

Legal Aid family law attorneys meet with approximately 800 survivors of domestic violence each year at the intake centers at both D.C. Superior Court in Northwest and United Medical Center in Southeast. Survivors can secure same-day protection orders at either center.

Ms. Jones filed for a Civil Protection Order (CPO). Mr. Lewis consented to the CPO, but surprised Ms. Jones by serving her with a complaint for custody of Emma. A year later, the custody case was ongoing, and Ms. Jones asked for an extension of the CPO. A trial ensued. Ms. Jones and another of Mr. Lewis’ ex-girlfriends testified at trial about the abuse they suffered at his hands. And Mr. Lewis’ aggression was on full display in the courtroom—once, he even shoved Jamie during a break.

As the custody case moved forward, Mr. Lewis made an offer: he would drop his request for custody if Ms. Jones would agree not to seek child support. While this is not entirely fair, Ms. Jones was nevertheless thrilled. She secured a well-paying job (using the degree she earned after she escaped Mr. Lewis’ abuse) and is gladly bearing the financial burden of raising her daughter knowing that she is keeping her safe.

“We have a future now because of Legal Aid.”
CORRECTING MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Lew Ruffin has twice been the victim of mistaken identity. Once, it nearly cost him his life. In 2001, Mr. Ruffin was shot several times, including in the brain and stomach. The shooter had mistaken him for someone else. Permanently disabled, Mr. Ruffin could little afford another bad break. “I’m used to working, you know before I got shot, like 16-hour days,” he told us. “My body just won’t let me do the things I want to do.”

But in 2003, Mr. Ruffin learned that the daughter he believed was his was not in fact his biological child. He eventually scraped together $500 to pay for a DNA test, which confirmed he was not her father. After sharing the results with the baby’s mother, he never saw them again.

Years later, believing the situation was long behind him, Mr. Ruffin learned that the District had filed a child support case against him, taking the position that he was still financially responsible for the child. “I’m disabled because somebody thought I was somebody else,” he said. “It’s like for me to go through this again with the court because you think I’m somebody else.”

Mr. Ruffin connected with Legal Aid in 2013 through our courthouse project at D.C. Superior Court Paternity & Child Support Branch and Legal Aid family law attorney Ashley McDowell took his case. Ashley litigated Mr. Ruffin’s case for the next four years. Finally, the District agreed that Mr. Ruffin was not the child’s father and dropped the child support case. Now, he can use his modest wages from his part-time job as a driver for a homeless shelter to pay for rent and food.
PROTECTING TENANTS

Arthur Lloyd’s adult son faced significant challenges from mental health conditions, and had spent time hospitalized as a result. One day, Mr. Lloyd found his son sleeping at Fort Totten Metro Station. He barely recognized him with his thick beard, but Mr. Lloyd wanted to re-establish his relationship with his son and help him get off the streets.

Mr. Lloyd filed the proper paperwork to add his son to his lease, but his son’s stuttering and other symptoms made the property manager uncomfortable. The property manager not only rejected Mr. Lloyd’s request to add his son to the lease, but “barred” his son from the building and began calling the police whenever he visited, alleging that he was trespassing.

Mr. Lloyd simply wanted his son to be able to visit him again. Mr. Lloyd also feared that the ongoing dispute might put him at risk of eviction. He began working with Legal Aid housing attorney Maggie Donahue, who filed a lawsuit against the landlord for discrimination and breach of the tenant’s right to “quiet enjoyment” of the property.

When she saw who [my son] was, she decided against it. She decided, well no, we can’t let him lease the apartment.”

“Maggie was good,” Mr. Lloyd said. “She kept your spirits up, and she never promised me anything, that we were going to be able to get something out of this case. She just said we’re going to keep going, and we’re going to keep fighting for you Mr. Lloyd. So I felt good about that.”

After Legal Aid threatened to file a Motion for Preliminary Injunction, the landlord finally agreed to a confidential financial settlement and to “lift the bar” on Mr. Lloyd’s son.

One in four renters in the District spends at least half of their income on rent. It’s one reason why some 35,000 renters face eviction every year. And while unemployment is often cited as a cause of eviction, often the reverse is true: a 2016 study found that evicted workers were up to 22% more likely to lose their jobs after they had been evicted.
Fantahun Amare, an immigrant from Ethiopia, had recently found a room for rent in a home in Petworth. He entered into an oral lease with the owner, also an Ethiopian immigrant, and paid his first month’s rent and security deposit in cash. Mr. Amare was planning to apply for a D.C. driver’s license so he could pursue job opportunities that required a license. He needed proof of residency, and asked his landlord for a lease or other documentation. The landlord—whose home was not registered as a rental property—refused and began pressuring Mr. Amare to leave.

When those efforts failed, the landlord changed the locks to Mr. Amare’s apartment. The landlord then filed a case seeking a Temporary Protection Order in the D.C. Superior Court Domestic Violence Unit, claiming he lived in the home with Mr. Amare (providing jurisdiction for the Domestic Violence Court) and that Mr. Amare had threatened him. Based on these allegations, the landlord was able to get an order that Mr. Amare vacate the home.

Homeless, Mr. Amare came to Legal Aid seeking help. Family law attorney Stephanie Westman helped Mr. Amare return to his home by proving the landlord was not, in fact, Mr. Amare’s roommate. Undeterred, the landlord turned around and sued Mr. Amare for eviction alleging nonpayment of rent—specifically, for the month in which he had forced Mr. Amare out of his home. Legal Aid negotiated a favorable settlement in the landlord and tenant case. Mr. Amare received a refund of rent paid, forgiveness for any past rent due, and an additional cash settlement.

“Those who don’t have money, those who don’t have nothing: come to Legal Aid!”
Alesia Mainasara’s apartment, where she lived with her two children, was in a chronic state of disrepair. Her heater was broken all winter, and her air conditioner was broken all summer. Mold had been growing on her leaky walls, and the apartment was infested with insects and even geckos. Fed up with her landlord’s refusal to remedy the problems, Ms. Mainasara began withholding rent. Rather than simply fixing the problems in the unit, as required by law, her landlord sued to evict the family.

Legal Aid referred the case to Stephen DeGenaro and Joe Cardosi of Jones Day, one of 14 law firms currently participating in the citywide Housing Right to Counsel Project.

The Project aims to dramatically increase access to counsel for tenants with a housing subsidy who are facing eviction, and as a result, are at risk of losing their subsidy. Given the District’s rising housing costs, low-income tenants who lose their subsidy may find it virtually impossible to find alternative housing in the private market. The Project has been remarkably effective in preventing evictions—tenants receiving representation through the Project are seven times less likely to face a writ of restitution (the order that precedes an eviction) than those who do not obtain counsel through the Project.

Stephen and Joe fought zealously for Ms. Mainasara, engaging opposing counsel on a weekly basis and thoroughly documenting both the substandard conditions of her home and the inadequacy of her landlord’s belated repair attempts. As a result, Ms. Mainasara was victorious on all fronts. She and her children kept their home and housing subsidy, and her landlord made the comprehensive repairs they needed. On top of that, the landlord waived more than $2,000 in alleged outstanding rent and late fees.

“She fought and fought and fought and fought until they got a good agreement.”
Several years ago, Nicole Washington* applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for her ten-year-old son, Tano,* who had been experiencing debilitating seizures. He would become unusually aggressive before and after the seizures, and as a result he was struggling in school. When the Social Security Administration denied Tano’s application, Ms. Washington sought help from Legal Aid.

Legal Aid referred Ms. Washington and Tano to Paul Thompson of Cooley. Paul was all in: he accompanied the Washingtons to medical appointments and interviewed Tano’s physicians to gather evidence of his disability. Paul also worked with Tano’s school to develop an Individualized Education Plan to address the impact of his seizures on his memory.

At the hearing, Paul demonstrated the severity of Tano’s condition. Three years after Ms. Washington first applied for benefits, the judge issued a favorable decision awarding Tano SSI benefits, including back benefits, providing life-changing support for Ms. Washington and her son.

SYSTEMIC FOOD STAMPS LAWSUIT
In August 2017, Legal Aid joined with Hogan Lovells and the National Center for Law & Economic Justice to file a federal suit alleging widespread problems with D.C.’s implementation of the food stamps program (officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP). The suit, filed on behalf of four named plaintiffs, a larger class of SNAP applicants recipients, and sister agency Bread for the City, alleges that D.C. failed to timely process SNAP applications and has wrongfully terminated SNAP recipients without notice, forcing many poor families to turn to emergency food programs for help. The problems, which in part relate to implementation of a new flawed computer system, were so widespread that Bread for the City reported a 52% increase in the number of households seeking emergency food in October 2016 versus October 2015.
THE NEED FOR LEGAL AID

Low-income District residents deal with a range of civil legal problems each year that, without access to legal services can leave them homeless, hungry, caught in abusive relationships, and more.

In the 35,000 eviction cases filed in DC Landlord and Tenant Court each year:

- 95% of landlords are represented by attorneys
- Vs. fewer than 10% of tenants

67% Low-income households nationwide who experienced at least one civil legal problem last year

15% Matters where these households received adequate legal help

On average, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department receives 1 domestic violence-related call every 15 minutes

DATA SOURCES:
Some 60% of respondents said housing was their top concern, and 13% said they feared being homeless.

1 in 6 respondents said they had experienced domestic violence.

More than half of respondents struggled to put food on the table, and 18% encountered problems applying for public benefits programs.

One-third of respondents reported debt-related problems, including utility bills, medical bills, mortgage, and credit cards.

LEGAL AID’S IMPACT

Legal Aid’s 45 attorneys and five paralegals provided full representation, advice, or brief services in over 3,500 matters last year, focusing on many of the biggest barriers that prevent D.C. residents from overcoming poverty. These barriers were highlighted by the 2016 Community Listening Project, where researchers interviewed more than 700 D.C. residents living in poverty to learn more about the challenges they face.

COMMUNITY LISTENING PROJECT FINDINGS

LEGAL AID’S WORK

902 CASES

Housing

1,517 CASES

Family/DV

700 CASES

Public Benefits

397 CASES

Consumer

Legal Aid’s work benefited more than 9,500 District residents.

DATA SOURCES:
2017 SERVANT OF JUSTICE AWARDS

On April 25, 2017, Legal Aid honored Vanita Gupta, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., Partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson, with our Servant of Justice Award.

The 2017 Klepper Prize for Volunteer Excellence went to David Young, Associate at Rope & Gray.

Legal Aid thanks all of our supporters, and especially the Dinner Steering Committee, led by Peter Thomas of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett and Jonice Gray Tucker of Buckley Sandler.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
(1/1/2016 TO 12/31/2016)

REVENUE

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EXPENSES

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<td>Total Expenses Less Contributed Services</td>
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Please visit www.LegalAidDC.org to see our complete audited financial statement and IRS Form 990.
Legal Aid’s Generous Associates Campaign raised $1.79 million in 2017—smashing 2016’s record of $1.475 million. More than 4,000 people from 85 law firms came together for the Campaign. “This is an unbelievable organization that has earned the support that it gets from the law firm community,” Honorary Campaign Chair Seth Waxman of WilmerHale said. “It’s the legal aid organization that is setting the standard for others.”

### 2017 TOP FUNDRAISING FIRM COMPETITION RESULTS

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### 2017 GENEROUS ASSOCIATES CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS

- **Sarah Bartle** | Crowell & Moring
- **Kristen Baker** | Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman
- **Nicole Callan** | WilmerHale
- **Brendan Carroll** | Alston & Bird
- **Kevin Gallagher** | WilmerHale
- **Alana Genderson** | Morgan, Lewis & Bockius
- **Dan Herbst** | Reed Smith
- **Zorba Leslie** | Steptoe & Johnson
- **Jessica Morton** | Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison

### 2017 GENEROUS ASSOCIATES CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS

- **Mark Murphy** | Steptoe & Johnson
- **Victoria Murphy** | Mayer Brown
- **Amy Rigdon** | Latham & Watkins
- **Eli Schlam** | Williams & Connolly

### 2017 GENEROUS ASSOCIATES CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS

- **Ann Sultan** | Miller & Chevalier
- **Sean Williamson** | Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman
# Leadership Cabinet

## Annual Law Firm, Corporate, and Foundation Gift Recognition Program

The Leadership Cabinet recognizes our most generous organizational donors (9/1/2016 to 8/31/2017).

### Platinum Patron

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<td>Jones Day*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirkland &amp; Ellis*</td>
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<td>Latham &amp; Watkins*</td>
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<td>Sidley Austin*</td>
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### Gold Patron

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