

Our 2018 Pro Bono Hot list Celebrating law firms that do well by doing good.



GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER

Going to Bat for Individual DACA Recipients

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR A GIBSON, DUNN & Crutcher pro bono team to act after the Trump administration announced it was rescinding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program that shielded many undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children from deportation.

At the time, Gibson Dunn lawyers including Theodore Boutrous Jr. and Ethan Dettmer, among many others at the firm, were already representing Daniel Ramirez Medina, one of the first DACA participants arrested by immigration officials after President Donald Trump took office. They helped secure Ramirez Medina's release from custody in March 2017, and have continued a fight to restore his authorization to work in the U.S.

"Lawyers really do have a unique opportunity to both engage in our profession, and to contribute to society," Boutrous said. "It just makes me appreciate being a lawyer all the more when we're involved in these pro bono cases."

When the DACA rescission order came down on Sept. 5, the legal team—which also included immigration lawyer Luis Cortes Romero and colleagues from Barrera Legal Group; lawyers from the nonprofit Public Counsel; University of California, Irvine School of Law dean Erwin Chemerinsky; and prominent Harvard Law School professor Laurence Tribe—swiftly agreed that they would challenge the DACA rescission in court, and they did so on behalf of six individual plaintiffs who benefited from the program.

"We thought it was very important to have individual plaintiffs—DACA recipients—in the midst of these cases," Boutrous said. "These are outstanding people. ... the DACA program really gave them this platform and this safety net to help them get an education and embark on a profession."

In January, the team beat back the U.S. Justice Department's bid to dismiss a consolidated case that combined the individual plaintiffs'



challenge with that of several states, the University of California system—represented by Covington & Burling (see story on page 14)—and the Service Employees International Union.

Even more important for DACA recipients, the team also convinced U.S. District Judge William Alsup of the Northern District of California to issue a court order that effectively kept the immigration program in place across the whole country. The team then shut down the government's unusual move of asking the U.S. Supreme Court to consider the case without letting the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit do so first. An appeal is now pending at the Ninth Circuit.

Barrera Legal Group's Cortes Romero, co-counsel on the case and a DACA beneficiary himself, said he was "blown away" by Gibson Dunn's commitment to the DACA challenge and, before that, the firm's efforts on behalf of Ramirez Medina.

"I knew that it was going to allow us to be taken seriously," Cortes Romero said. "It really highlighted the issue on this very national level."

—SCOTT FLAHERTY

"THESE ARE OUTSTANDING PEOPLE. ... THE DACA PROGRAM REALLY GAVE THEM THIS PLATFORM AND THIS SAFETY NET TO HELP THEM GET AN EDUCATION AND EMBARK ON A PROFESSION."

—THEODORE BOUTROUS JR.