

Anthony Ostlund has a passion for pro bono work



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The attorneys at Anthony Ostlund Baer & Louwagie P.A. have built a reputation as the go-to lawyers for complex business issues, especially when a case looks like it's headed to trial. But not all of the firm's work is for businesses. Over the last 30 years, the firm has also been a leader in providing pro bono legal services to those in need. At Anthony Ostlund, pro bono work is a passion that's shared by everyone at the firm. The team's commitment to helping those who can't afford their regular rates is one of the reasons many attorneys and support staff work at the firm.

Anthony Ostlund prides itself on its expertise in successfully litigating far-ranging, complex cases, and its choice of pro bono projects fit right in.

That's been true for the 18 years Steve Pincus has been with the firm.

"It's part of our culture," Pincus said. "The firm deserves a lot of credit. It fully supports us in working on these cases."

The firm has any number of pro bono cases on its plate at a time, but two are at the forefront currently.

Pincus, a firm shareholder, and Peter McElligott, an associate, have been working for more than five years on *Tenner Murphy*,

et al. v. Harpstead, as Commissioner of MN Dept. of Human Services. Norm Pentelovitch, another shareholder, has spent the last few years on *Esparza v. Nobles County*.

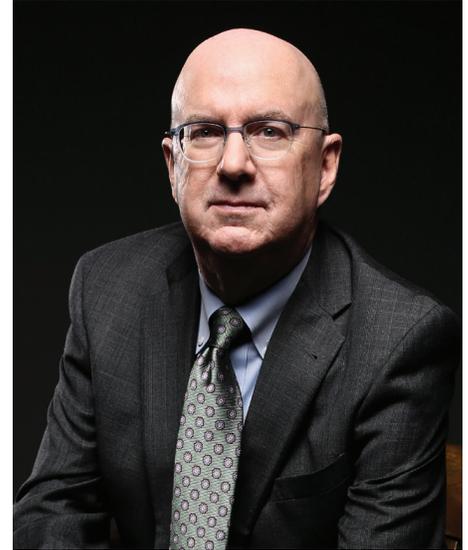
For these attorneys, their pro bono cases are the opportunity to give back to the community in the best way they can - using their skills as trial lawyers to help people who need help. In Pincus and McElligott's case, they have partnered with Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, the Minnesota Disability

Law Center, and Nichols Kaster PLLP to bring a complex, class action lawsuit in federal court. The lawsuit challenges Minnesota's statewide practice of overreliance on group home settings as housing for people with disabilities. It calls for the residents themselves to be able to use their waivers to decide where to live. After a number of early successes including a court order finding the commissioner violated the due



process rights of the class members, Pincus and McElligott look forward to continuing to fight on behalf of the class at a trial in 2021.

Pentelovitch's current pro bono project has the firm partnering with the ACLU of Minnesota on a case. *Esparza v. Nobles County* is a class action in which a class of individuals asked for a permanent injunction against the Nobles County sheriff for imprisoning immigrants without legal authority. The department would arrest immigrants and even after their cases were adjudicated the sheriff would keep the immigrant imprisoned in violation of Minnesota law. Pentelovitch, along with the



legal team at the ACLU-MN, prevailed on almost every issue in the case, and the district court permanently barred the Sheriff and County from illegally imprisoning immigrants. Now Pentelovitch is working on the next phase of the case which is a trial to determine a damages award. That case will, hopefully, be heard in 2021.

Where does the firm's commitment to giving back start? The example is set from the top with the names on the door. Joe Anthony has long been involved with Legal Aid, serving as Chair of the Board of the Fund for the Legal Aid Society. Rich Ostlund is known for his work on community health issues including his current role as chair of Fairview Health Services' Board of Directors. But the entire team is devoted to pro bono work and helping in the community - no questions asked.

When a case presents itself, the more complex the better, the firm's leadership is quick to jump to action.

"It's about 'how can we add value?' 'Can we impact a systematic change?'" McElligott said. "Our pro bono cases really align with the values of our firm and what kind of issues we care about."

Balancing all of their casework - billable and nonbillable - is a challenge, but one these attorneys relish. There is no difference for them in their commitment.

"The firm takes it really seriously," Pentelovitch says. "All of our clients are treated equally. My zealous advocacy is for all - it's not a sliding scale. We do all of our work to the best of our abilities."