PRO BONO HIGHLIGHTS 2018
PURSUING JUSTICE. IMPACTING LIVES.
SIDLEY
Sidley client Guadalupe Plascencia, with her family in Los Angeles. To read her story, see page 10.
“OUR DEDICATION TO PRO BONO IS NOT JUST ABOUT FULFILLING A PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION. IT IS ABOUT OUR SHARED BELIEF THAT WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER AS A FIRM TO ADVOCATE FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING POVERTY OR MARGINALIZATION, JUSTICE HAPPENS.”

—MICHAEL J. SCHMIDTBERGER
Executive Committee Chair
Sidley Austin LLP
At the heart of what we do as lawyers is the desire to achieve justice. The most meaningful experiences in our profession often come from advocating for pro bono clients. Such work bonds us together, resulting in triumphs that reverberate through communities and have a lasting impact.

It is during advocacy for the most difficult pro bono matters that I have seen our lawyers and staff reaffirm their commitment to doing the most good. Through pro bono work, we not only do good for others, but for ourselves – strengthening our relationships with our clients, our colleagues and our communities.

The stories in this year’s report illustrate how we have stepped forward to protect some of the most vulnerable individuals in society. We will continue to do all we can to help our clients achieve equal justice under the law. Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time and energy to broadening our pro bono impact over the last year.

JEFFREY T. GREEN
Firmwide Pro Bono Chair
PRO BONO OVERVIEW

Empowering people and communities through pro bono legal work is an integral part of Sidley's culture. In 2018 alone, lawyers and staff across the firm contributed 143,188 hours of pro bono service.

Through our six firmwide initiatives, we are able to extend our reach to individuals and organizations around the world:

- CAPITAL LITIGATION PROJECT
- POLITICAL ASYLUM AND IMMIGRANTS’ RIGHTS PROJECT
- CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES PROJECT
- VETERANS ADVOCACY PROJECT
- PRO BONO PROJECT FOR THE ARTS
- EMERGING ENTERPRISES PRO BONO PROGRAM

Our annual Pro Bono Highlights report captures a selection of last year’s major cases, our firm’s impact and the breadth of our work. Sidley’s collective efforts have helped give prisoners on death row hope; provided sanctuary for refugees escaping persecution; defended the rights of LGBTQ individuals; supported people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; obtained relief for veterans in distress; aided arts programs in expanding their audiences; and fostered the growth of entrepreneurs in developing countries.
“Sidley is helping people who find themselves in one of the most terrifying and complex situations imaginable.”

—RACHEL BRIGGS OBE
Hostage US Executive Director

Hostage US is a nonprofit that provides essential care and support to the families of Americans kidnapped or illegally detained overseas. When the hostage returns home, Hostage US provides access to health and mental health services and assists with the myriad practical problems they face while trying to rebuild their lives.
143,000+
HOURS
DEDICATED
TO PRO BONO
SERVICE IN 2018
Sidley’s Capital Litigation Project ensures that inmates incarcerated on death row have access to high-quality legal representation – perhaps for the first time since their arrest. To date, we have represented 23 prisoners at all stages of post-conviction proceedings. Since the Project’s inception, more than 190 Sidley partners, counsel and associates have invested more than 157,000 hours in these cases.

Sidley’s representation of inmates on Alabama’s death row has been greatly supported by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a nonprofit based in Montgomery, Alabama.

IN MEMORY OF WILLIE MINOR

After more than 22 years on death row for a crime he should never have been convicted of, Willie Minor passed away on December 21, 2018, with his innocence claims still pending before the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals. During our representation of Willie, we discovered that the State had suppressed – during trials in 1996 and 2001 – forensic autopsy evidence that proved he could not have killed his infant son whom he loved dearly. Without that exculpatory evidence, Willie was convicted in a purely circumstantial case otherwise plagued by the ineffectiveness of his trial counsel.
BUCKLEW V. PRECYTHE

In a dramatic series of events, Sidley obtained a last-minute stay of execution from the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Russell Bucklew, an inmate on Missouri’s death row who has a rare medical condition, cavernous hemangioma, that would cause excruciating pain during a lethal injection of pentobarbital.

The case provided the Supreme Court with its first opportunity to consider the legal standards governing how to evaluate an inmate’s claim that his medical condition makes a state’s standard method of execution cruel and unusual. More broadly, the case provided another occasion for the Court to confront the troubling problem of lethal injection executions that fail, and what courts should do about it.

In its decision, the Court ruled against Bucklew, stating that “The Eight Amendment … does not guarantee a prisoner a painless death.” The firm is proud of our work and will continue to protect the rights of those on death row.

STEVEN PETRIC V. THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Sidley achieved a significant victory on behalf of Steven Petric, an inmate on Alabama’s death row. At the request of the Southern Center for Human Rights, Sidley became involved in the matter in 2014. Our lawyers conducted extensive fact discovery, both into the crime and into Petric’s childhood background, and ultimately filed a post-conviction petition alleging ineffective assistance of counsel at both the guilt and penalty phases of trial. Following a four-day evidentiary hearing, the Circuit Court of Jefferson County granted the post-conviction petition in full, finding trial counsel constitutionally ineffective and ordering a new trial.
Sidley client from Nigeria pictured at her home. To read more about her story, see page 9.
POLITICAL ASYLUM AND IMMIGRANTS’ RIGHTS PROJECT

Through the Political Asylum and Immigrants’ Rights Project, Sidley handles impact litigation and individual representations, including asylum cases and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases. Sidley also partners with several legal departments of our corporate clients to host clinics and staff cases to help asylees and refugees obtain lawful permanent resident status and bring family members to the United States.

In 2018, Sidley attorneys handled many significant immigration matters. The scope of our asylum work has uplifted a diverse range of courageous people, from communities of immigrants defending their lawful right to remain in the U.S. to individuals seeking protection because of their political beliefs or sexual orientation. Among those granted asylum this year were a family from Nigeria shielding their daughter from the threat of female genital mutilation; an Eritrean man taking a stand for peace; and four siblings from El Salvador escaping domestic and gang violence.

“We could not do this work without them.”

—PAULA FITZGERALD
Executive Director
Ayuda
GUARDING THE RIGHT TO DUE PROCESS

A team of Sidley lawyers and staff won a nationwide temporary restraining order (TRO) to stop U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on the Cambodian community planned for the end of January 2019, despite the government shutdown. Many of the plaintiffs came to the United States decades ago as refugees fleeing the Khmer Rouge. The victory followed a string of wins in the case, including an earlier nationwide TRO, a nationwide preliminary injunction, class certification and an order finding all objections to discovery waived. Due to the work of the Sidley team, many class members were able to secure the right to remain lawfully in the U.S. Together with Asian Americans Advancing Justice in San Francisco, the team continues to work toward achieving a permanent injunction.

STANDING UP TO INJUSTICE

Together with Public Counsel, Sidley filed a Complaint in Intervention in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California on behalf of three refugee mothers who were forcibly separated from their children at the U.S. border and held in prolonged detention. The complaint seeks, among other relief, access to the mental health services needed to address the trauma that families experience from such separation. While the case is ongoing, the mothers and their daughters have been reunited, and the court has ordered settlement discussions.

The matter has received global media attention and is the first class action filed by migrant parents supported by statements from numerous prominent child trauma experts in the U.S.

“What these children are experiencing is unconscionable and contrary to who we are as a people,” said Mark Rosenbaum, director of Public Counsel Opportunity Under Law. “The bond between parent and child is to be protected at all costs, not to be severed by [the] government for use as a bargaining chip.”
A FAMILY’S BRAVE FLIGHT

Fleeing the threat of female genital mutilation (FGM), a family from Nigeria sought Sidley’s help in obtaining asylum in the U.S. Our clients, a mother and her 11-year-old daughter, pictured on page 6, escaped their home after the grandmother attempted to kidnap the child to perform FGM. Sidley argued that the mother and daughter were eligible for asylum because the woman had suffered past persecution and both have a well-founded fear of suffering future persecution based on, among other things, their membership in particular social groups, including “Nigerian Women Who Oppose Forced FGM.”

Sidley submitted two affirmative asylum applications on behalf of the family, including the woman’s husband and two sons, and immigration authorities granted both. This significant victory followed on the heels of an order issued by former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, which created uncertainty surrounding the viability of asylum claims based on particular social groups.

A MAJOR WIN FOR IMMIGRANTS’ RIGHTS

In a case that garnered significant media attention, a federal court issued a nationwide preliminary injunction blocking termination of temporary protected status (TPS) for over 300,000 nationals of El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan, many of whom have lived lawfully in the United States for decades.

The Judge found substantial evidence that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) improperly changed the criteria for TPS, a humanitarian program that allows immigrants to live and work in the U.S. until conditions in their countries of origin make it safe to return. Beyond the more than 300,000 TPS holders, this ruling protects approximately 200,000 U.S. citizen children who faced an impossible choice between remaining in the U.S. without their parents or relocating to countries they have never known.

Working across six U.S. offices, the Sidley team partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Day Laborer Organizing Network to represent the plaintiffs. Many states and cities joined as amici to support our preliminary injunction request.
“I remain committed to raising my voice and helping to achieve change for the community.”

—GUADALUPE R. PLASCENCIA

“At the end of the day, we do not choose the color of our skin or where we come from. We can only choose to have a good heart or bad attitude.”

VICTORY IN WRONGFUL ICE DETENTION

Together with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, Sidley represented Guadalupe Plascencia in a lawsuit centering on her constitutional rights against unlawful seizure. After living in the U.S. as a citizen for two decades, raising her family and building a life in California, Plascencia was detained by ICE officers in San Bernardino County and threatened with deportation. Sidley helped secure a global settlement against the U.S. and the County for $55,000 plus mediation costs.
FINDING FREEDOM AFTER TRAGEDY

A Sidley team obtained asylum for four siblings from El Salvador who escaped not only horrific domestic abuse at the hands of their father, but also the threat of violence by “La Mirada Locos 13” and MS-13 gangs. Their mother and uncle were shot by gang members, and the oldest sibling was forced to leave school after refusing to join the MS-13. The team worked closely with the National Immigration Justice Center, which referred the case, as well as colleagues from JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.

MOVING FORWARD FOR EQUALITY

Sidley secured asylum for a Ugandan refugee who received death threats because of her sexual orientation. The team, working together with the Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, helped in filing the asylum application, preparing the client extensively for the asylum interview and appearing with her before an immigration officer.

SEEKING PEACE FROM THE PAST

In a case that the National Immigrant Justice Center referred to Sidley, an immigration judge granted U.S. asylum to a 33-year-old Eritrean citizen who was forcibly conscripted into the military as a teenager. He ultimately fled his country after enduring years of torture, including imprisonment, by government officials because of his political beliefs.

TRIUMPH FOR THE PERSECUTED

A federal immigration judge granted asylum to our client, a 27-year-old Ugandan political activist who fled his country after enduring months of imprisonment and torture by supporters of President Yoweri Museveni. DHS waived its right to appeal, guaranteeing his release from ICE detention, where he had been held indefinitely since his arrival in the U.S. The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the Immigration Justice Campaign and the American Friends Service Committee referred this case to Sidley.
Sidley client Eric Steward. To learn more about his story, see page 15.
CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES PROJECT

Sidley works closely with many civil rights advocacy organizations across the country to protect and defend the constitutional rights and civil liberties of all people, especially those most vulnerable to marginalization, persecution or profiling. Our clients include prisoners and detainees, women in the workplace, LGBTQ individuals, and racial and ethnic minorities. Our pro bono practice works through the courts, administrative agencies and legislatures to safeguard, promote and expand individual rights and civil liberties so that all people can live freely and proudly.

“We extend our strongest appreciation to Sidley, who helped achieve healthcare justice for D/deaf and hard of hearing low-income adults in Maryland. THANK YOU for the pro bono assistance and this important victory.”

—LAUREN YOUNG
Director of Litigation
Disability Rights Maryland
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
SUPREME COURT CLINIC

Third-year law students work under the supervision of Sidley lawyers to research and draft briefs in cases at the petition stage and on the merits. The students also monitor lower court decisions to identify potential candidates for petitions for writs of certiorari.

In 2018, the Clinic filed eight petitions for certiorari, eight reply briefs and two briefs in opposition. Students also contributed to two reply briefs on the merits for two petitioners, as well as a brief as amicus curiae.

TIMBS V. INDIANA

Working with the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL), Sidley drafted an amicus brief on behalf of Tyson Timbs. The Supreme Court sided with Timbs in a unanimous decision that upholds Constitutional limits on the ability of states to seize private property used in connection with crimes. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote that: “The historical and logical case for concluding that the 14th Amendment incorporates the Excessive Fines Clause is overwhelming.”

RYAN V. POYSON

In this capital case, the State of Arizona sought review of the Ninth Circuit’s decision to grant habeas relief to Sidley’s client, calling into question the Circuit’s interpretation of a Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. Sidley filed a brief in opposition, urging the Court to uphold the Ninth Circuit’s ruling partially based on our client’s traumatic childhood, mental health issues and past substance abuse, as well as the fact that Arizona’s complaint relied on a contradictory argument. The Court agreed with Sidley’s brief, and Arizona’s petition was denied.
A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

A Sidley team has been serving as co-counsel in an ongoing case on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The case, *Steward v. Texas* (photo of Eric Steward on page 12), involves a class of 3,600 people who are unnecessarily institutionalized in nursing facilities in Texas rather than being permitted to live in the community. After obtaining class certification and defeating a motion to dismiss by the State of Texas in 2016, the case finally proceeded to trial in a U.S. district court in San Antonio in October 2018. A decision is expected sometime in 2019. The Sidley team is working alongside Disability Rights Texas and the Center for Public Representation on this long-running case, which was filed in 2010.

“Sidley has been an extraordinary partner in helping us challenge the state-wide system that does not provide the supports and services persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities need to live as independently as possible.”

—GARTH CORBETT
Senior Attorney
Disability Rights Texas

ROSALÉS-MIRELES V. UNITED STATES

In collaboration with local counsel, Sidley represented Florencio Rosales-Mireles in a criminal sentencing case before the Supreme Court. Rosales-Mireles had pled guilty to illegal re-entry into the U.S. Despite a miscalculation in his sentencing by the Probation Office, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the longer than necessary sentencing recommendation. Sidley researched and drafted the merits briefings and assisted in the preparation for oral argument on behalf of Rosales-Mireles. The Supreme Court reversed and remanded, citing that the Fifth Circuit’s plain error review standard was unnecessarily narrow and risked the “unnecessary deprivation of liberty.”

SUPREME COURT CLINIC:

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“Sidley’s commitment goes beyond altruism to a sincere appreciation for equal rights and dignity for all people.”

—LABONI HOQ
Litigation Director
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles

“Sidley has always surpassed our high expectations. They bring to the table not just generous resources to allow us to represent our clients without compromise, but also lawyers who work with us as true partners invested in the best interests of our diverse clients.”

PROTECTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Together with Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles, Sidley obtained a settlement on behalf of Santa Ana resident Theresa Le in a case brought under the California Voting Rights Act. The case challenged the election of Santa Ana City Council members by an “at-large” vote, alleging that the voting system resulted in racial polarization and prevented Asian Americans from electing candidates of their choice. As part of the settlement, Santa Ana agreed to place a measure on the November 2018 ballot for voters to approve the City’s transition to “by-district” elections, as well as to redraw the district map.
DEFENDING EDUCATION RIGHTS FOR ALL

As a result of a lawsuit filed against the U.S. Department of Education by the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), a federal judge found that the Department had engaged in an “illegal delay” of the 2016 Equity in IDEA regulations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The regulations, which were supposed to go into effect on July 1, 2018, address racial disparities in special education by providing children with vital early intervention services. Sidley served as co-counsel with the National Center for Youth Law in this matter.

“Today is a victory for children, especially children of color and others who are at-risk for being inappropriately identified for special education,” said COPAA’s executive director, Denise Marshall.

“Sidley has demonstrated a broad and longstanding commitment to increasing access to justice.”

—ERIC ANGEL
Executive Director
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

ADVOCATING FOR A TRIBUTE TO THE FALLEN

Sidley is representing the State & Local Legal Center as amicus curiae in a case involving a challenge to the constitutionality of the Peace Cross, a memorial built in 1925 to honor soldiers who lost their lives in World War I. The case is pending on the merits before the Supreme Court.

SHIELDING THE RIGHTS OF TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

Sidley filed a complaint on behalf of Lambda Legal and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in connection with changes that were made to the Bureau of Prisons’ (BOP) Transgender Prisoner Guidelines. The revisions would place prisoners in facilities corresponding with their biological gender, rather than based on their gender identity, endangering the safety and well-being of transgender prisoners.

“Your pro bono legal support is invaluable in our fight for full LGBTQ equality!”

—NICOLE GREENIDGE-HOSKINS
Senior Vice President and General Counsel
Human Rights Campaign
SECTION 1983 CIVIL RIGHTS CASES

The firm represents a number of plaintiffs whose constitutional rights were violated during arrest or while being detained in jails, as well as prisoners deprived of medical care, held in inhumane conditions or subjected to violence. We had 32 active 1983 matters in 2018, amounting to approximately 14,000 pro bono hours, nearly twice the amount of hours worked in 2017.

DAVIS V. NANNY

Sidley obtained a rare victory on behalf of Christopher Novus Davis, who was beaten by four guards while a patient in a maximum security mental health facility. The defendants claimed that Davis, who was placed in the facility after he was found unfit to stand trial due to anger outbursts during his criminal case, caused the scuffle. However, the federal jury in Illinois found in Davis’s favor on his claim of excessive force and failure to intervene against all four defendants and awarded him compensatory and punitive damages.

SOMMERVILLE V. CITY OF NEW YORK, ET AL.

Following a 2016 assault at the hands of three City sanitation workers, Wesley Sommerville was falsely arrested, jailed and then prosecuted without cause. Sidley successfully settled the civil rights lawsuit on behalf of our client when the City of New York’s motion for summary judgment was denied.
VETERANS ADVOCACY PROJECT

Sidley provides pro bono assistance to disabled veterans seeking fair and timely benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Armed Forces. Our lawyers represent veterans on claims for VA service-connected disability compensation at the agency and before federal courts, applications for Combat-Related Special Compensation to the military, and petitions to military corrections boards for relief, such as discharge upgrades and military retirement.

We work with individual veterans seeking benefits, as well as with veterans’ advocacy groups to pursue systemic challenges. Sidley also participates in clinics to help veterans assess their claims for benefits and match them with lawyers when appropriate. We are grateful to have worked alongside many corporate clients on both individual representations and in the clinic setting.

9,444 LAWYER HOURS IN 2018
LONG-AWAITED JUSTICE IN SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES

Following a hearing before the Board of Veterans Appeals, a Navy veteran finally won her case arguing for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) benefits as a result of a rape that occurred in the 1980s. The VA had previously denied her claim due to insufficient proof that the attack occurred, but Sidley was able to use performance reviews, disciplinary records, medical records, family member statements and the client’s live testimony to reach victory. She was awarded a disability rating of 50% and received an immediate award for back benefits of approximately $81,000, along with ongoing monthly payments.

An Army veteran who experienced a brutal sexual and physical assault and car jacking during the 1990s won his appeal seeking PTSD benefits. In reversing its prior orders, the VA accepted Sidley's arguments that the veteran was entitled to disability compensation even though the trauma occurred after hours off base.

SIGNIFICANT UPGRADE VICTORIES

An Army veteran's discharge characterization was upgraded from “General” to “Honorable,” permitting the veteran access to education benefits under the G.I. Bill. The case hinged on whether the Army had followed its procedures when discharging the veteran for alleged drug use. This victory is particularly notable because courts are reluctant to second-guess the military on personnel matters and rarely enjoin the military to take specific action.

The Army Discharge Review Board awarded a veteran an upgrade from “Other Than Honorable” to “General,” making him eligible for the first time for disability benefits from the VA. Sidley established that the client had been drugged and sexually assaulted while in the Marine Corps and that the misconduct that led to his Other Than Honorable characterization was linked to the PTSD he developed after the assault.
“Sidley’s pro bono assistance has changed these veterans’ lives.”

—JOAN GILLHAM
Attorney and Counselor at Law
Metroplex Veterans Legal Services
Program Director

“Their commitment to veterans’ legal needs in Texas is extraordinary. The gratitude from the Texas veterans is immeasurable.”

A LIFE-CHANGING OUTCOME

Sidley obtained a 100% disability award from the VA for an Army veteran who suffers from PTSD and is totally unable to work due to his combat experiences in Vietnam. Prior to receiving this award, the veteran was living below the poverty level. He had previously applied for VA benefits 15 times over more than 20 years and lost every time. The award grants him at least $3,000 per month in lifetime benefits.
PRO BONO PROJECT FOR THE ARTS

We are proud to provide pro bono assistance to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations that cannot typically afford the legal services that all businesses need to survive and grow. This investment helps our communities thrive and encourages our neighbors to share their stories and preserve their rich histories. Our work includes venue contracting, international touring logistics and finance, property acquisition and nonprofit incorporation and taxation. In supporting the visions of artistic innovators, we hope to connect people from all backgrounds.

“I cannot thank the Sidley team enough for their tremendous work to help Alison Cook Beatty Dance create a solid foundation on which to expand and grow its organization. It was truly an absolute pleasure and honor working with the Sidley team, and we will remain incredibly grateful for years to come!”

—ALISON COOK BEATTY
Founder
Alison Cook Beatty Dance
Alison Cook Beatty’s “Whale” performed by Alison Cook Beatty Dance in 2018. Photography by Rob Klein.
ALISON COOK BEATTY DANCE COMPANY

Through our pro bono partnership with Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, Sidley helped the Alison Cook Beatty Dance company transition from a limited liability company to a tax-exempt non-profit corporation. This allows patrons and donors to make tax-deductible contributions so the company can devote all of its income to enhancing performances and developing its community outreach programs. The Sidley team helped establish the corporate structure of the company, register it as a charity authorized to fundraise and apply for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service*.

*Regrettably, the Sidley team’s offer to dance with the company at a performance was politely declined.

CREATIVITY EXPLORED

Creativity Explored is a San Francisco-based organization that provides opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to create and share their artwork with the community. The artists are able to work individually or collaboratively in a variety of mediums, including painting, sculpting, printmaking and fabric art. Creativity Explored also pairs the artists with mentors and helps them display their work at professional gallery exhibitions. Sidley has advised Creativity Explored in connection with trademark matters, and in 2018, we achieved a federal trademark registration for one of the organization’s core taglines, Art Changes Lives, which is also the name of its annual gala.

REANDA ART CONSERVATION, LLC

Sidley represented this Chicago-based art conservation company in corporate matters that included drafting a customer service agreement and advising on various customer contract-related issues. The client was referred to Sidley by Lawyers for the Creative Arts.
A One Acre Fund client.
EMERGING ENTERPRISES PRO BONO PROGRAM

The Emerging Enterprises Pro Bono Program provides legal support to small and medium-sized for-profit enterprises and market-focused nongovernmental organizations and nonprofits. Our lawyers work together with businesses that have a clear positive social and economic impact for the poorest citizens in developing countries across Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. By assisting with the market-based growth of small and medium-sized local businesses, the Program helps boost local economies, increase job opportunities, raise incomes and provide other social benefits to improve the lives and livelihoods of the world’s poorest people. Sidley partners with several legal departments of our corporate clients to deliver these services.
“This kind of effort by Sidley’s lawyers across the globe is the quintessential example of a company using its greatest asset, the talents and passions of its people, for maximum social good.”

—MATT FORTI
Managing Director
One Acre Fund

HELPING FARM COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA THRIVE

Sidley works with the nonprofit One Acre Fund to support smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa. As part of its mission to reduce endemic poverty and hunger in the region, One Acre Fund provides its clients, many of whom are women, with financing for high-quality seed and fertilizer, training on agricultural techniques, solar lights and clean energy resources to help power farms, and mobile technologies to connect farmers with market access.

One Acre Fund has enlisted the help of Sidley’s lawyers on a variety of matters, including: advising on complex loan agreements to help the organization increase access to capital and fundraising opportunities, providing ongoing assistance with registrations of entities in more than a dozen countries and protecting One Acre Fund’s IP rights globally. Sidley also spearheaded a multi-year effort to bolster One Acre Fund’s internal HR policies, trainings and compliance controls.
ATIKUS

Based in Rwanda and the U.S., Atikus harnesses data to help financial institutions and business development service providers engage with low-income clients. Atikus is partnering with the United States Agency for International Development and the Wildlife Conservation Society on a pilot project in Rwanda, working to stimulate economic opportunities while preserving the region’s natural resources. Sidley assisted Atikus with entity structuring, drafting contracts to guide sales and implementation, and advising on financing rounds.

“Sidley has helped Atikus protect itself, its clients and our various stakeholders in a way that enables us to focus on what matters most – building products that will have a meaningful impact in the communities in which we operate.”

—KATE WOSKA
CEO and Co-Founder
Atikus

ECO FUELS KENYA

Eco Fuels Kenya (EFK) produces bioenergy and agricultural products from croton, an indigenous East African nut with no other known commercial or edible use. EFK has created a brand new source of income for over 5,000 rural Kenyans who could once only utilize their croton trees for charcoal and firewood. Sidley’s support for EFK has included restructuring, as well as closing two rounds of equity investment.

ESOKO

Esoko is empowering rural communities by building mobile technology that agribusinesses use to increase their supply chain efficiency. The company sends information on commodity prices, weather forecasts and agronomic advice to smallholder farmers and links buyers with sellers. Sidley advised Esoko on establishing reseller partnerships, as well as with investor agreements and intellectual property issues.

“Sidley has provided Esoko amazing support since our inception, playing an essential role in helping us build our reseller network, including franchises across Africa and in more than 12 countries around the world.”

—MARK DAVIES
Founder and former CEO
Esoko
Sidley client Raymond North-Bey pictured in front of his home. To learn more about his story, see page 31.
SERVING OUR NEIGHBORS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

In addition to our cornerstone projects, we provide diverse pro bono services that address the critical legal needs of our neighbors and the communities in which they live, from ensuring that clients are able to live in their rightful homes to protecting survivors of domestic violence.

HOME FOR GOOD

Sidley secured a victory in a precedent-setting intestacy matter on behalf of Washington, D.C. resident Raymond North-Bey. The D.C. Superior Court held that he could not seek to inherit the home in which he lives from the estate of the woman who raised him from infancy and who he believed to be his adoptive mother. In a unanimous panel decision, the D.C. Court of Appeals reversed and remanded, holding that “an individual may claim equitable status as a decedent’s child” in cases where the individual proves that “the decedent took him in as a minor and, from that time on, objectively and subjectively stood in the shoes of his parent.”

“I have appreciated working with Sidley every step of the way. I am overjoyed to be able to remain in my childhood home. Thank you, thank you for all that you have done.”

—RAYMOND NORTH-BEY

SUPPORTING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Since 2016, more than 50 lawyers from Sidley’s London office have contributed over 3,000 pro bono hours to the representation of disabled people before the Social Security Tribunal. The firm’s work has helped overturn decisions denying Personal Independence Payments (PIP) from the UK government that help individuals meet the additional costs associated with having a disability.

“Sidley’s pro bono work has made a real difference in the lives of children and families in need. As the court and bar continue efforts to increase pro bono representation in domestic relations cases, the District can count on Sidley to respond and take action when it is needed most.”

—JUDITH SANDELOW
Executive Director
Children’s Law Center
MIRIAM’S KITCHEN

Miriam’s Kitchen is dedicated to ending chronic homelessness in Washington, D.C. by providing support services, programming, advocacy and outreach. Sidley is representing Miriam’s Kitchen in contract discussions with the D.C. government related to grant funding to help pursue this goal.

“Sidley has demonstrated untiring commitment and cogent problem solving in their approach to litigating cases.”

—RHONDA CUNNINGHAM HOLMES
Executive Director
Legal Counsel for the Elderly

DEFENDING THE HOMELESS

Sidley successfully represented a homeless client in his appeal for supplemental security income benefits. The client suffers from severe depression, anxiety and insomnia, partially as a result of his chronic homelessness, and the benefits he received will help him meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter.

“The DEC is indebted to Sidley for the depth and diligence with which you have approached some challenging and highly important matters for our organization this year. Your pro bono team is outstanding and deserving of the highest commendation.”

—SALEH SAEED OBE
Chief Executive
Disasters Emergency Committee

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) is a nonprofit comprising 14 leading UK aid agencies that raise money for humanitarian crises around the world.

PROGRESS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In partnership with the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, a Sidley team successfully represented a domestic violence survivor in her appeal of an erroneous order that granted joint custody of her daughter to her abuser. This significant win reinforces the importance of these statutes, which make it more difficult for domestic abusers to obtain joint custody.
A WIN FOR TENANTS’ RIGHTS

Sidley successfully represented a tenant in a highly contentious dispute with her landlord. After a full evidentiary hearing with contested legal and factual issues, a D.C. Superior Court judge denied the landlord’s motion for judgment and ruled that our client and her three daughters and granddaughter could remain in their home.

“I felt like we were family. Everyone that I came in contact with at the firm was genuine and caring. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts!!!”

—PATI JOSEPH
Sidley client

“LawWorks is incredibly proud of the pro bono commitment and contribution from the team at Sidley. Sidley’s lawyers have shown the highest standards of professionalism and care, acting successfully for clients with complex physical and mental health problems who have been denied the vital financial assistance they need.”

—MARTIN BARNES
Chief Executive
LawWorks

SUPPORTING EQUAL HEALTHCARE

On behalf of the District of Columbia Primary Care Association (DCPCA), Sidley is assisting the organization in its fiscal sponsorship of D.C. Connected Care Network and related arrangements, as well as with hospital and grant agreements. DCPCA is a nonprofit dedicated to providing D.C.’s vulnerable residents with access to high-quality healthcare, regardless of their ability to pay.

“Sidley’s pro bono legal support has been instrumental in creating the ability to establish an affiliate organization of the DCPCA and its members.”

—TAMARA SMITH
President and CEO
District of Columbia Primary Care Association
FELLOWSHIPS

Sidley sponsors several fellowships that expand the capacity of legal services programs to serve the critical legal needs of clients and help young lawyers develop practical legal skills. Through the Incoming Associates Pro Bono Fellowship Program and the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) Fellowship Program in Chicago, recent law school graduates are paid their full Sidley salary to work at legal nonprofit organizations for up to ten weeks before joining the firm.

We also sponsor the year-long Sidley Austin Appellate Advocacy Fellowship in the Barbara McDowell Appellate Advocacy Program at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia. The work spans the range of subjects handled by Legal Aid, including evictions, custody and domestic violence issues, public benefits and consumer protection.

In addition, together with our corporate partners, KPMG and Microsoft, Sidley co-sponsors Equal Justice Works Fellows at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) and The Bronx Defenders.

“I was deeply impacted by my Sidley Fellowship at the American Civil Liberties Union. While sharpening my litigation skills, I had the opportunity to advocate for gender equity in the workplace and the fundamental human rights of LGBTQ individuals. I learned from a dynamic and supportive team about different legal strategies for working toward social justice in marginalized communities.”

—YASMIN AGELIDIS
Los Angeles

“In addition to helping me develop practical and substantive legal skills, my PILI Fellowship with Equip for Equality provided a personally meaningful experience. As a person who is hard of hearing, I am familiar with the frustrations of seeking accommodations and navigating inaccessible environments. My Fellowship gave me the opportunity to help individuals with disabilities navigate their own experiences and mobilize their rights in a way that helps them to accomplish their goals.”

—ROSS KLOEBER
Chicago

2018 STATS:
28 FELLOWS
22 NONPROFITS
7,530 HOURS

PURSUING JUSTICE. IMPACTING LIVES.
WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE THE MOST DIFFERENCE

We were honored to be recognized by some of our partner organizations this past year.

Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program – “Gold Award” pro bono contributions

Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award – D.C. Housing Right to Counsel Project

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law – Corporate Partner Award

Disability Rights Legal Center Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award – Christopher Griffin

One Acre Fund’s Service Partner of the Year Award

Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs – Outstanding Achievement Award

National Veterans Legal Services Program’s 2018 Lawyers Serving Warriors® Excellence Award – Emily Wexler

The Lydia Watts Firm Voice Award presented by the Network for Victim Recovery of DC – Karen Kazmerzak

The Legal Aid Society of New York City’s 2018 Pro Bono Publico Awards – Marshall Feiring and Richard Leavy

PURSUING JUSTICE. IMPACTING LIVES.
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In addition to our commitment to pro bono services, Sidley is dedicated to supporting the communities in which we live and work through our Corporate Social Responsibility Program. Together with local corporate partners, we mentor students and promote literacy programs, empower women to pursue their career goals, and support food pantries and shelters that serve struggling families. Through such volunteerism, we hope to foster greater compassion and collegiality in communities around the world. To learn more about our Corporate Social Responsibility Program, please visit sidley.com/social-responsibility.