

2025 U.S. District Court – Civil Pro Bono Panel Annual Report

U.S. District Court – District of Colorado

Presented by the Standing Committee on Pro Se Litigation of the U.S. District Court

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Overview

The Civil Pro Bono Panel began as a pilot project in 2013 and was formalized as a local rule in 2014. The program is a successor to the [Faculty of Federal Advocate’s \(FFA\) Counsel/Co-Counsel pro bono program](#). The Panel is a vital resource to some of the many pro se litigants who appear before the Court. By volunteering on the Panel, attorneys can gain experience, feedback from judicial officers, and available resources to assist them with training and financial reimbursement.

The program’s ability to place volunteer counsel successfully is documented. From the implementation of the program until the end of 2025, 605 orders appointing counsel were entered and there have been 398 successful appointments – a 66% overall success rate.

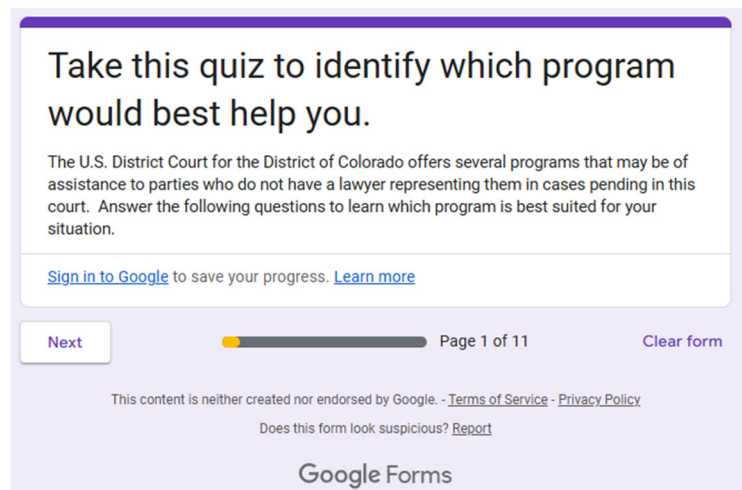
The Panel is always welcoming new volunteer attorneys. Those interested should visit the Civil Pro Bono Panel webpage on the Court’s website [here](#), where you can find a list of available cases, information about the Panel, and the Civil Pro Bono Panel application. Attorneys who are interested in joining the Panel or have any questions should email cod_probonopanel@cod.uscourts.gov.

Pro Bono Programs Comparison Tools

The District of Colorado has three programs that rely on volunteer attorney participation to assist pro se litigants: the [Civil Pro Bono Panel](#), the [Federal Limited Appearance Program \(FLAP\)](#), and the [Federal Pro Se Clinic \(FPSC\)](#). To ensure the district’s pro se litigants understand the resources available to them, the Attorney Services Division in the Clerk’s Office devised pro bono resource comparison tools for pro se litigants to refer to and determine which program(s) may be able to assist them depending on their circumstances, and how to properly request such assistance.

The resources are available on the Court’s [Representing Yourself](#) webpage. The comparison tools exist in two formats. The first is in the format of a [chart](#) that gives pro se litigants a full view of each available program. The second is in the form of a [Google Forms quiz](#) that allows pro se litigants to answer questions that will help them determine which program is best for them.

The Attorney Services Division also created a more in-depth internal resource tool, so Clerk’s Office staff, judicial officers, and other court employees are knowledgeable about the different programs available to pro se litigants, allowing them to provide accurate information to the public.



Google Forms quiz available to pro se litigants to identify which program would best help them.

Civil Pro Bono Panel Procedure

When attorneys join the Panel, they are committing to the idea they will be randomly called at some point to serve as pro bono counsel. Attorneys do have the opportunity to submit in their application types of cases they are interested in volunteering for as well as types of cases they would like to opt out of. This allows the Clerk’s Office to be able to accurately match attorneys with cases that fit their interests and abilities. Attorneys also have the freedom to decline a case.

The process begins with a pro se litigant filing a motion requesting the Court appoint them Pro Bono Counsel. The presiding judicial officer then either denies the motion or grants it. When a motion is granted, the Clerk’s Office receives notice, and the case is added to the list of available cases. Under D.C.COLO.LAttyR 15(f), the Clerk’s Office will begin attempting to appoint an attorney within fourteen days of the order. If an attorney is not appointed after four attempts, the Clerk’s Office notifies the presiding judicial officer(s). As a courtesy, the Clerk’s Office also enters a notice on the docket so the pro se litigant and other parties involved are aware the recruitment was unsuccessful.

When an attorney accepts a case, the Clerk’s Office will notify chambers that an attorney has volunteered to take the case and enter a Notice of Appointment. Under D.C.COLO.LAttyR 15(g), appointed counsel is to either formally enter their appearance or file a Notice Declining Appointment no later than 30 days after receipt of the Notice of Appointment.

The FFA offers support to Panel members who accept cases by providing malpractice insurance upon request, reimbursement of certain costs, and periodic training seminars on pro bono-related topics. Attorneys may also request CLE credits for pro bono representation – one general CLE credit for every five billable-equivalent hours, with a maximum of nine general credits in a three-year compliance period.

Practitioner Perspectives in 2025

(The views of the attorneys below do not represent the views of the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado)

Attorney Insight from Civil Pro Bono Case *Younger v. American Airlines, Inc.* – by Sara Maeglin and Mary Jo Lowrey

Mary Jo Lowrey and I were lucky enough to assist Mr. Ronald Younger in his case against United Airlines starting in November 2024. Mr. Younger had proceeded on his own through the administrative process at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and filed his pro se complaint in court. Before we met Mr. Younger, he had responded to a motion to dismiss. Mr. Younger was a good advocate for himself—he articulated the facts of his case well and was timely in his responses—but, understandably, needed assistance articulating his legal claims and navigating the federal court system. Judge Charlotte N. Sweeney recognized Mr. Younger’s struggles during oral argument on United Airlines’ motion to dismiss, and referred Mr. Younger’s case to the Civil Pro Bono Panel. We joined his case shortly thereafter.

Mr. Younger was engaged, organized, and easy to work with. He is also a kind, smart, and driven man. Through consultation with Mr. Younger, we were able to draft and file a Second Amended Complaint that refined claims he pled in his complaint and amended complaint, and include others he missed, like violations of Section 1981 and wrongful discharge in violation of public policy. As his advocates, we were also able to work with opposing counsel to draft a Proposed Scheduling Order and exchange discovery. While these tasks required Mr. Younger’s participation, attorney intervention streamlined these processes, putting him at ease and moving his case forward.



Sara Maeglin, Esq.

Six months or so after we joined the case, the parties were able to settle on amicable terms. In fact, the



Mary Jo Lowrey, Esq.

attorneys settled the matter face to face, in a coffee shop, with our clients just phone calls away. Settling a case with fancy coffee and pastry in hand is the best way to resolve a case. Trust us. More importantly, Mr. Younger was happy to resolve his case after years of pushing it forward on his own, and we were happy to play our small part in Mr. Younger's case.

One unexpected joy we experienced by taking a case through the Civil Pro Bono Panel was the satisfaction that comes with meeting a client (and case) where they are. Especially in the employment law context, getting a case to litigation often takes years, and involves significant work and stress. Joining a pro se case in litigation allowed us to help someone in a short amount of time and without some of the negatives associated with the long pre-litigation process. In a profession often plagued with starts and stops, the Civil Pro Bono Panel allowed us to be present with our client and do good work.

Attorney Insight from Civil Pro Bono Case *Williams v. Simpson* – by William C. Groh, III

This past year, I was pleased to be able to represent Dewey Simpson pursuant to an appointment from the civil pro bono panel. As this was my first pro bono case with the panel, I was not quite sure what to expect. The panel made it easy for me to get up to speed in terms of access to summaries of the case and other information needed to assess the issues and to get acquainted with the rules and procedures associated with pro bono appointments. Mr. Simpson was being sued by a former in-law for (among other things) the proceeds of the sale of a house he had co-owned with another family member. Lawsuits between family members generally add a layer of difficulty and personal animosity, but the plaintiff in his case was also pro se. That often adds an additional layer of difficulty: the pro se party is usually on their guard and ready to discount or disregard anything the opposing lawyer tells them about their claims or their case. With no one on the pro se party's side to talk sense, impasses can develop quickly.

In this case, that especially proved to be an issue because the matter was legally complex and emotionally charged. Mr. Simpson proved to be a kind-hearted and conscientious person who had suffered considerable tragedy; much of which had occurred in the house he was being sued over. Mr. Simpson had lived in the house with his wife



William C. Groh, III, Esq.

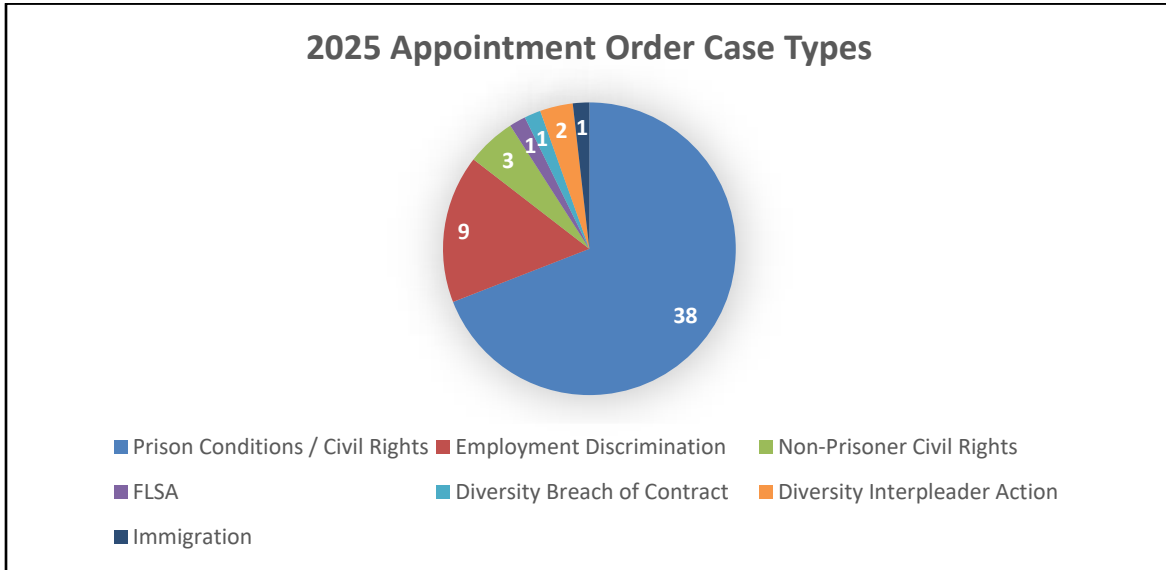
and brother-in-law. The brother-in-law had to retire due to a workplace injury and Mr. Simpson and his wife cared for him for a 15-year period, including paying for household items and maintenance. Early on, the brother-in-law had deeded Mr. Simpson and his wife's respective 1/3 interests in the house. The brother-in-law's health became steadily worse and his care became more and more difficult. When Mr. Simpson's wife passed, Mr. Simpson was no longer able to take care of his brother-in-law, who went to live in a nursing home. Mr. Simpson continued to interact with his brother-in-law (as much as possible during Covid), but needed to move. With the brother in law's consent, he sold the house and moved to Chicago. After expenses incurred to get the house ready for sale, there was little left. Mr. Simpson's other former brother-in-law (acting as executor for the deceased brother-in-law's estate) sued him for civil theft and argued (among other things) that the deed conveying the interest in the property was void and the estate was entitled to all proceeds and property in the house.

During the case, Mr. Simpson was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and Lewey Body Dementia. We successfully conducted a preservation deposition for Mr. Simpson in Illinois by video. Meanwhile, because the plaintiff was proceeding pro se on behalf of an estate without counsel, I moved to dismiss the case for lack of standing, as a pro se party cannot represent an estate in court without counsel. The court ultimately granted the motion and dismissed the case.

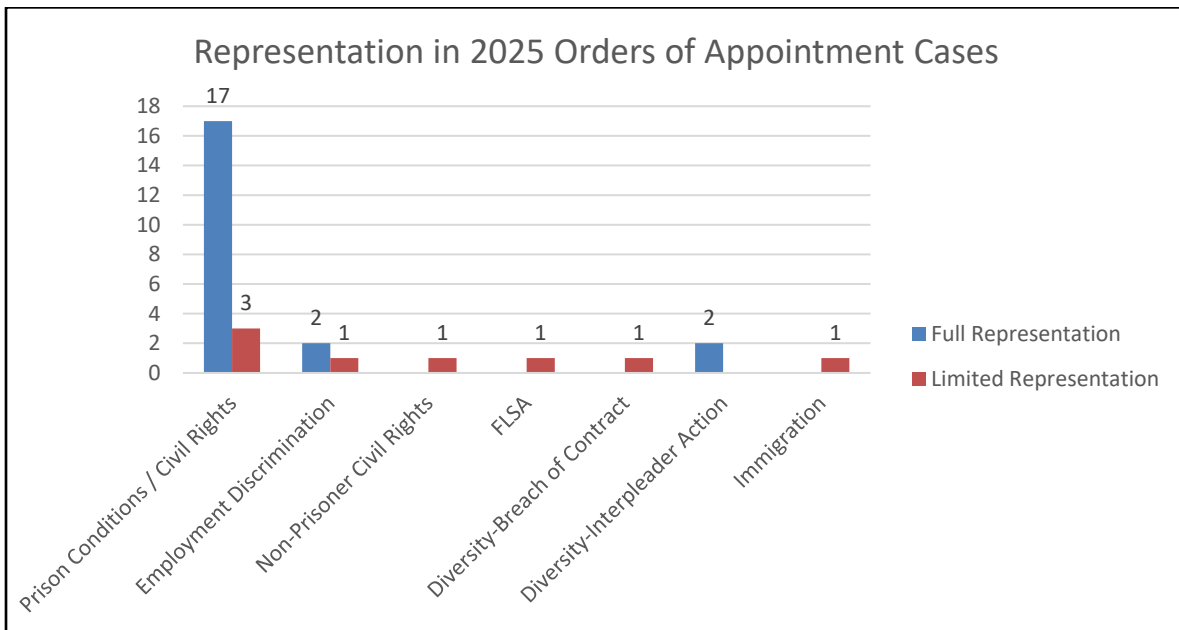
In situations like these, I find it's important to identify what you can really help with and to understand what is beyond your control. I couldn't earn the plaintiff's trust or mediate a settlement between the parties, but I could at least treat the plaintiff with respect and try to explain our position as best as I could. The case itself may have seemed intractable on paper, but being able to help Mr. Simpson through this situation was one of my most rewarding experiences in twenty years as a litigator. I hope to be able to do it again soon.

2025 Pro Bono Case Data

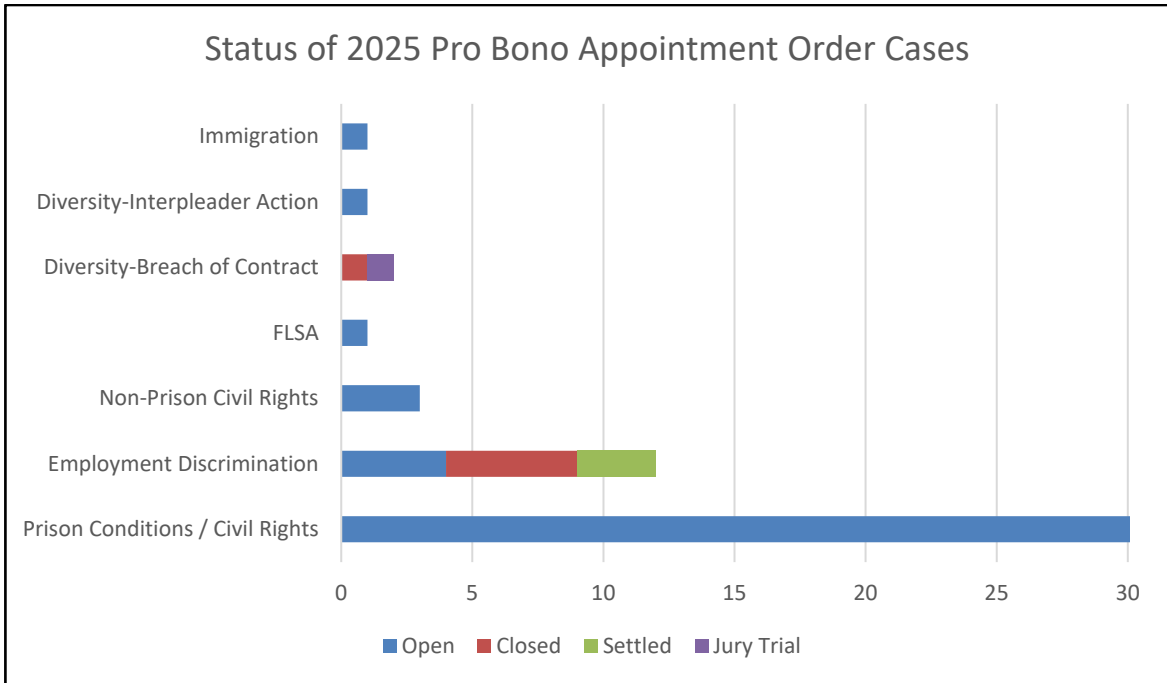
In 2025, judicial officers entered 55 orders in 54 civil cases appointing pro bono counsel.



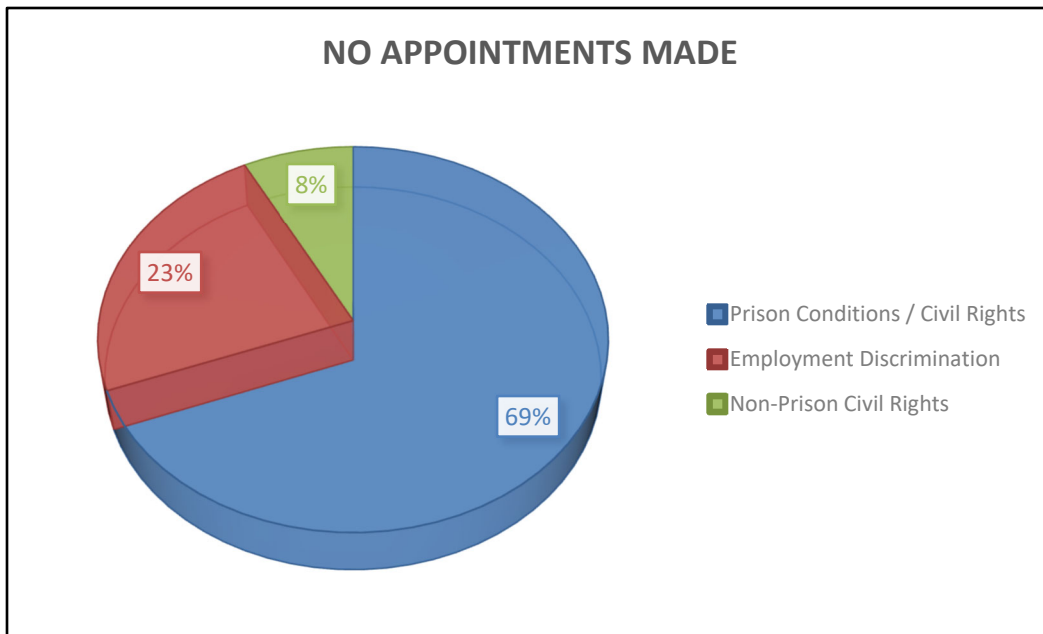
Of the 55 orders, a total of 29 appointments were successful in either full or limited scope representation.



The status of the 2025 cases are as follows:

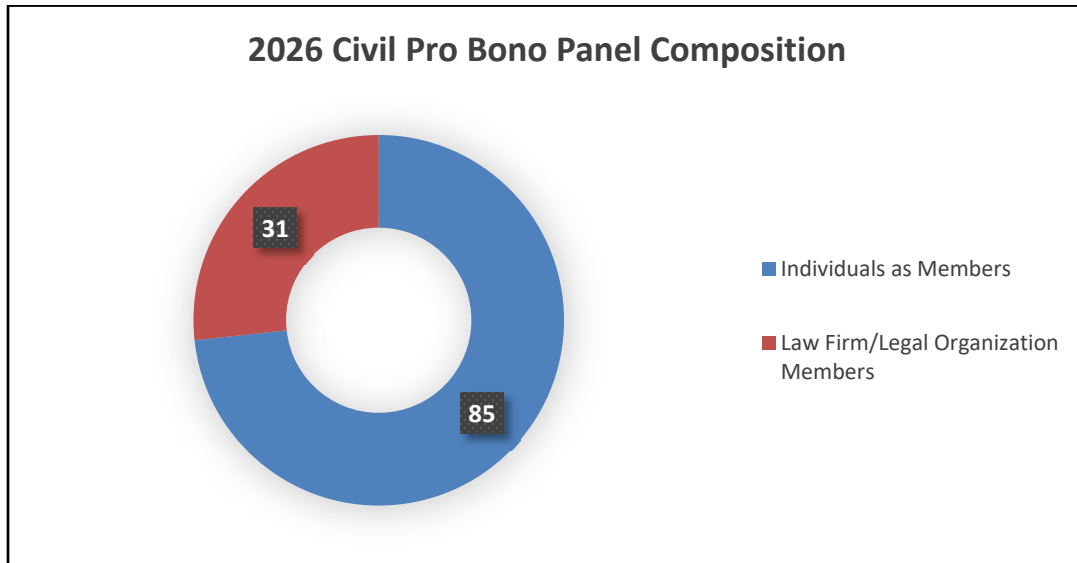


Unsuccessful placement of counsel – 26 of the 55 orders granted in 2025 remain unfulfilled.

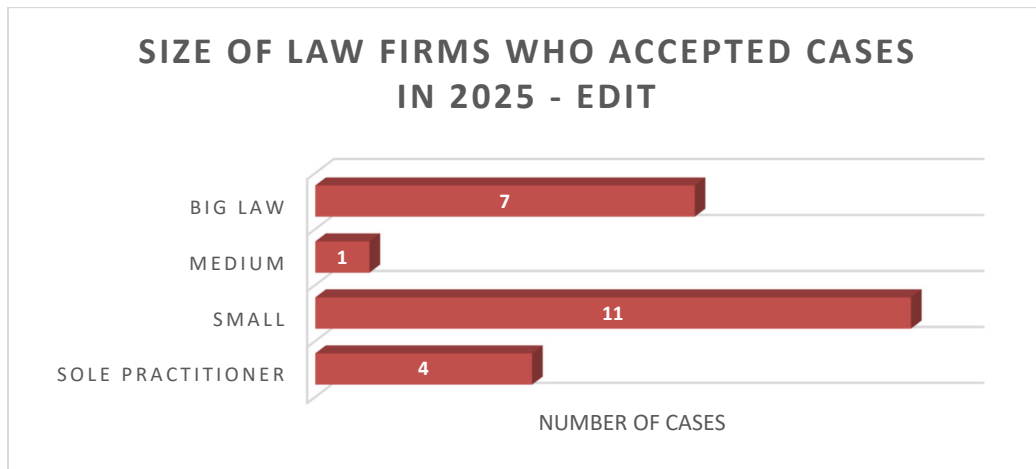


2025 Pro Bono Panel Member Data

Below is a graph representation of the current membership¹ of the Civil Pro Bono Panel:



The size of law firms who accepted cases in 2025 varied greatly.



¹ There was a 48% decrease in membership since the 2023-2024 Annual Report. On April 16, 2025, Magistrate Judge Kathryn A. Starnella and Magistrate Judge [ret.] Kristen L. Mix, Co-Chairs of the U.S. District Court’s Standing Committee on Pro Se Litigation, which oversees the Civil Pro Bono Panel, sent a letter to the inactive Panel members stating that those who had not taken a case in four years were to be removed from the Panel, unless they reaffirmed their participation and commitment to taking on pro bono representation.

2025 U.S. District Court Pro Bono Honor Roll

The following attorneys and law firms accepted two cases in 2025:

- James D. Jenkins of *James D. Jenkins, Attorney at Law* –
 - 22-cv-00369-NYW-TPO Harvey v. Lisac et al (Prisoner Civil Rights) – with attorney Ben LaBranche (featured below)
 - 25-cv-01827-STV Ngo (PS) v. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Immigration)
- Yun Yun Wang of *Britt Tshering and Wang* –
 - 24-cv-00602-CNS-STV Griffin v. Ortiz et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
 - 25-cv-00071-GPG-NRN Denson, Jr v. Bergman et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
- *Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP* –
 - Annalisa Christina Kolb, Clark D. Seaman, Kaitlin M. DeWulf, Kristen M. Kennedy, and Timothy Michael Reynolds – 24-cv-02016-CNS-KAS Peoples v. Colorado Dept. of Corrections et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
 - Clark D. Seaman, Leif Henry Olson, Timothy Michael Reynolds, and Zachary M. Dube – 24-cv-02810-PAB-STV Sparks v. Stancil et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
- Matthew William Buck of *Red Law* –
 - 23-cv-02349-DDD-STV Buitimea v. Harty et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
 - 24-cv-01105-SKC-STV Whitehorn v. McCann et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)

The following attorneys and law firms accepted a case in 2025:

- Ben LaBranche of *Benjamin R. LaBranche PLLC* – 22-cv-00369-NYW-TPO Harvey v. Lisac et al (Prisoner Civil Rights) – with attorney James D. Jenkins (featured above)
- Brian Scott Green of *Law Office of Brian Green* – 21-cv-01434-CYC National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States v. Chase (Trademark Infringement)
- Madeline Marie Leibin of *Newman McNulty, LLC* – 24-cv-00968-GPG-STV Brown v. Marquez et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
- Adam Harrison of and Cynthia Jeannet Sanchez of *HKM Employment Attorneys LLP* - 24-cv-02127-NRN Urbina v. Employment Solutions Management, Inc. (Employment Discrimination)
- Katayoun Donnelly of *Azizpour Donnelly LLC* – 24-cv-02267-CNS-TPO Purves v. Pilot Travel Centers, LLC (Employment Discrimination)
- Alan Daniel Schindler of *Spencer Fane LLP* and Jamie Hughes Hubbard and John Anton Graham, III of *Stimson LaBranche Hubbard LLC* – 23-cv-03420-CNS-CYC Spencer v. Dwyer et al (Prisoner Civil Rights)
- Anna Natividad Martinez of *Martinez Law Colorado LLC* and Elisabeth L. Owen of *Vanguard Justice LLC* – 22-cv-02360-DDD-TPO Coney v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company (Diversity – Breach of Contract)

- Devin R. Weinberg of *Leon Cosgrove Jimenez, LLP* – 24-cv-02386-CNS-TPO Apodaca v. Paintin et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Brennden Prohaska, Christopher J. Casolaro, Isaac T. Smith, Madeline Scofield Ehlinger, and Summer L. Elliot of *Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP* – 19-cv-03224-DDD-TPO Swaw v. Johnson (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Cheyenne A.E. Moore of *Childs McCune Michalek LLC* and Rachel A. Sternlieb of *Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP* – 24-cv-01730-GPG-SBP Jackson v. Hurd et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Audrey DeRose Oliver of *Civil Rights Litigation Group*, Aurora Lynn Randolph of *ALR Civil Rights LLC*, and Dana Lindenberg of *Dana Lindenberg, Attorney at Law* – 15-cv-02849-RM-TPO Ajaj v. United States of America et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Deborah Yim and Ji Ye of *Primera Law Group* – 24-cv-00236-KAS Wren v. Collins et al (*Americans with Disabilities Act*)
- Jack David Robinson of *Robinson Disability Law LLC* – 24-cv-02078-CNS-KAS Midland National Life Insurance Company v. Ornelas et al (*Diversity-Interpleader Action*)
- Allison Kaye Kostecka, John D.W. Partridge, Julia Doody, Lydia F. Lulkin, and Ming Lee Newcomb of *Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP* – 24-cv-02187-GPG-TPO Clark v. Wolford et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Daniel Albert Nicholas Graham of *Holland & Hart LLP* – 24-cv-02078-CNS-KAS Midland National Life Insurance Company v. Ornelas et al (*Diversity-Interpleader Action*)
- J. Aaron Atkinson and Kaylee Cerny of *Hackstaff Snow Atkinson & Griess, LLC* – 24-cv-02225-DDD-SBP Adger v. TerraQuest, Inc. et al (*Fair Labor Standards Act*)
- Angela Campbell Tarasi and Brian J. Eutermoser of *King & Spalding LLP* – 25-cv-01948-CYC Shauley v. Stancil et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Allison Kathleen Regan and Brent Rollow Owen of *Haynes & Boone, LLP* – 24-cv-02431-SBP Alexander v. Martinez et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- David Lichtenstein of *Livelihood Law, LLC* – 24-cv-01003-MDB Marquez v. Valley Wide Health Services (*Employment Discrimination*)
- Joseph Brent Dulle, Marina Fleming, and Shevani Mehta of *Husch Blackwell LLP* – 25-cv-00613-RMR-TPO Meadows v. Dalton (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Arielle Kay Herzberg, Jack Rutledge Hodge, Mary Virginia Sooter, Sydney Donovan, and Tiana Lanise Wilson-Blindman of *Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP* – 24-cv-01730-GPG-SBP Jackson v. Hurd et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)
- Kara Ann Sweet, Lauren Pamela Carboni, Samuel D. Zarov, and Tamera Dietrich Westerberg of *Foley & Lardner LLP* – 24-cv-03283-RMR-MDB Noe v. Federal Bureau of Prisons et al (*Prisoner Civil Rights*)