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Expunction Gumption: Troutman Pepper Helps Pro Bono Clients Clear Names

Firm Attorneys from Coast-to-Coast Fight for Clients' Second Chances

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NEW YORK – An estimated 78 million people in the United States have a criminal record, and those with records face extreme economic devastation, according to the 2023 [National Survey of People with Records](#). In fact, one in two people with old convictions cited difficulties in finding a job, maintaining employment, or making a living.

At Troutman Pepper, attorneys across the firm's 20+ offices are using their skill sets to help clients secure expungements or expunctions — the clearing or sealing of their records. Last year, 37 attorneys logged more than 350 hours toward pro bono expungement work. Since January, 20 attorneys already have given back more than 200 hours.

"Expungement pro bono matters can be particularly meaningful for an attorney to take on because of their potential to be high impact and lifechanging," said Partner Sara Richman, who chairs the firm's [Pro Bono](#) practice. "The importance of giving someone a clean slate can't be overstated."

A Fresh Start in Washington, D.C.

Washington Associates [Quintessa Davis](#) and [Sahara Shrestha](#) recently partnered with [Rising for Justice](#) as part of the legal nonprofit's expungement program. The duo helped to seal the records of a client who had spent more than two decades dealing with difficulties associated with them.

The client had three arrests on his record – all had ended in non-conviction; however, their mere existence was enough to interfere with his ability to obtain higher-paying, stable employment. He had spent years juggling three jobs to make ends meet, and when he applied for new positions, he worried his arrests would be misinterpreted as convictions.

"This case was a meaningful experience, and I hope it inspires other attorneys to use their unique skill set to help others in need." Davis said. "Our client is relieved to be able to put his past in the past and move forward with his life. It was a wonderful experience partnering with Rising for Justice, and we hope to take on an additional case in the future," Shrestha added.

An Expungement Ally in Detroit

Last year, in Michigan, clean slate legislation took effect that automatically expunged certain convictions without the need for applications. For those unable to benefit from the program, organizations like [Lakeshore Legal Aid](#) help to fill the gap, pairing talented attorneys with clients in need.

Troutman Pepper recently partnered with Lakeshore Legal Aid and firm client [Ally](#), a leading digital financial services company, to host an expungement clinic. One dozen attorneys participated – six from Troutman Pepper and six from Ally – and met with 15 clients, drafting 23 expungement applications.

“Teaming up with Lakeshore Legal Aid is great because they lay the groundwork, and we leverage their efficiencies. It’s an easy way to use our skills to change people’s lives for the better,” said Associate [Nick Guttman](#).

Guttman recently partnered with fellow Associate [Emma Trivax](#) to help clear the record of a client who had been unable to start her dream childcare business because of the challenges she grappled with early in life, raising a family and securing financial stability for them. The first thing their client said after learning her entire record would be expunged: “I can finally start my business.”

“Every case we have worked with Lakeshore Legal Aid has been fulfilling,” Trivax said. “As part of the expungement process, we ask clients to obtain letters of support from community members. Reading these character letters for our clients is incredibly moving. The letters always tell the story of real people who have worked hard to improve their lives and make a meaningful impact in their community.”

Championing Pro Bono in Charlotte

In Charlotte, Associate [Eddie Nogay](#) is one of several “Champions” participating in the [Charlotte Triage Pro Bono Partnership](#), a task force working with the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy (CCLA) and Legal Aid of NC – Charlotte (LANC) to identify practice areas with the highest pro bono needs and bring intentional leadership and coordinated pro bono manpower to those areas.

Nogay is one of the “Champions” running point on criminal record expunctions, serving as a resource for attorneys taking on the pro bono matters.

“I’m here to help any way I can and to address questions from attorneys who are interested in working on these important pro bono matters,” Nogay said. “Nonprofits only have so many resources and rely on partnerships with attorneys in the private sector to assist with these cases. Our Charlotte office has really leaned into this work – we have taken on several individual expunction cases in the past year and partnered with CCLA to host an expunction eligibility session in February. We are excited to continue our work in this area.”

Each year, Troutman Pepper attorneys dedicate thousands of pro bono hours in support of nonprofits, immigrants, military veterans, children, the wrongfully convicted, civil rights and social justice initiatives, and so many more. Learn more at troutman.com/pro-bono.

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Troutman Pepper is a national law firm with more than 1,100 attorneys strategically located in 20+ U.S. cities. The firm’s litigation, transactional, and regulatory practices advise a diverse client base, from startups to multinational

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