



The **10-Year** Report 2015-2025

Introduction

Ten years. How did that happen?

From the beginning, when a small group of soon-to-be-retired law firm partners and counsel met in late 2015 to discuss what we might accomplish, in this next phase of our lives, we knew that we'd achieve more working together and with others in and outside of our law firm than we ever would alone. We also knew that we wanted to help address unmet needs in our communities, be it legal or public service work without compensation. And, after 40-plus years of practice, we recognized that each of us had tons of connections that might be useful. But we had no sense of what we actually would be doing, what we would be able to accomplish and how important our connections and relationships would be to The Pepper Center and its Fellows.

The story of the first decade of The Pepper Center for Public Service is one of the power of purpose, connections, and relationships. As we hope this report demonstrates, we have done quite a bit of worthwhile work. While we may not yet have maximized the full impact of our connections and our social capital, they have been critical to what we have been able to accomplish. And, not unexpected, helping others in our communities has, indeed, provided us with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. But what we didn't anticipate is that, in addition to finding purpose in the work, the strengthening of existing relationships and establishing new ones would be the "payback" — relationships so meaningful that they have enriched our lives and made this "encore" special.

Let's start with the relationships with each other. The Fellows of The Pepper Center now number 61 and we hope that number continues to grow. Some of us have long been friends as well as colleagues, but for most of us we either have not known each other at all or only had the most superficial of relationships. Working together in the Center, through projects, discussion groups and meetings, we have made and continue to make friendships, grow relationships, and have a sense of community that is often joyful, empowering, and unique.

There are also the relationships that we have built with associates and others who work with our Fellows on cases and other matters every day. Because we are retired, we have the time, most times, to take the time to work with junior lawyers in a more in-depth way than we did when we felt the pressures of practice. Our Fellows have been privileged to contribute to these young lawyers' professional and personal growth, and our Fellows, in turn, have gained new insights and friendships.

The relationships with our community partners also have been rewarding. In each of the Center's current areas of focus — civics, education, and immigration — we have worked and

continue to work closely with nonprofits, schools, law students, and other organizations. We have formed trusted relationships and friendships as well. These relationships are critical for the work we do; but they are also of value to our souls.

And then, of course, there are the relationships with our clients and the people in the communities we serve. These include high school students in underserved schools who gain a first exposure to the possibility of a law career and the experience of adults, from vastly different backgrounds, caring about them and being invested in their success. They also include immigrants fleeing unimaginable despair to seek out their own version of the American Dream, and the nonprofit agencies that assist them. Time and time again, we've been able to make a difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the communities where we live and work. But what is important to acknowledge is that they make a difference in our lives. It is a true privilege to know our clients and learn about their lives, struggles, and resilience. It is a privilege and joy to know the high school students. And it is an honor to have formed relationships and friendships with so many people in our communities.

This report will give you a sense of the work we have done in immigration, education, and civics, as well as our study on race in America. We are very grateful for the deep support from Troutman Pepper Locke, including its Inclusion group and the many other individuals at the Firm who have made our work possible; for our board, which provides leadership and unflinching support; for our new chief of staff, Mary Pat Walsh, and for the Firm's support of her role; for Sara Richman and the pro bono team for its partnership, encouragement and support in so many ways; for our partnership with numerous nonprofits, law schools, organizations and others with whom we have worked; for the contributions of numerous experts who have taken time to speak with us; and for every client we've had the privilege to represent and for individuals we have met along the way.

While no one knows what the next 10 years will bring, we look forward to continuing to make a difference in our communities and maintaining and growing relationships across them and with each other. And as we grow our Center, we hope that the Center will continue to be a rewarding and meaningful experience for our Fellows.

Thank you all for an incredible 10 years!

Amy B. Ginensky
Retired Partner
President and CEO

Recognition

The Pepper Center is thankful for the recognition it has received, including the following:

- Troutman Pepper Locke received the prestigious Philadelphia Bar Foundation's Law Firm Pro Bono Award 2024 for the Creation and Work of The Pepper Center for Public Service.
- The Pepper Center received the 2024 and 2021 "Light of Liberty Law Firm of the Year" award from the Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center (PIRC). As a nonprofit, PIRC aims to provide free, effective legal representation, legal counsel, education, and advocacy to help immigrants obtain or protect their legal status.
- Troutman Pepper Locke predecessor firm Troutman Pepper was recognized by HIAS Pennsylvania with a 2024 Golden Door Award in recognition for its and the Center's outstanding pro bono services provided to low-income immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as for hosting legal clinics and facilitating partnerships with other corporate partners. Through immigration legal services and an array of social services, HIAS Pennsylvania works to address their needs, defend their rights, and advocate for their equitable inclusion in American society.
- Anthony Vale, a fellow of The Pepper Center for Public Service, was named a 2024 Pro Bono Champion by the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, voluntary bar association that provides continuing legal education, professional services, information, and expertise to more than 16,000 attorneys who practice and teach immigration law.
- Center Fellow Lisanne Crowley, associate Elizabeth McCormick, and former associate Katherine (Kat) O'Konski were recognized by Tahirih Justice Center, a national nonprofit, as Journey to Justice 2024 Honorees for their pro bono legal work to help survivors and advance the organization's mission to end gender-based violence.

The Pepper Center for Public Service is a unique organization that draws on the talents of the firm's retired partners and senior attorneys to wrestle with tough problems facing our communities. Through the Center, these attorneys study, analyze, and work to resolve problems that affect the lives of people in our communities.

Tom Cole and Amy Ginensky with Philadelphia's Mayor Parker at the 2024 Philadelphia Bar Foundation's Award Ceremony



Immigration

Although it's frequently lost in the rancorous national debate on immigration, legal immigration to the United States is difficult, and is generally limited to one of four pathways: family reunification; employment-sponsored immigration; the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program ("green card lottery"); or humanitarian relief such as asylum and seeking status for victims of certain serious crimes, human trafficking, or domestic violence inflicted by U.S. citizen spouses.

The Pepper Center is most active in seeking humanitarian relief. Our typical clients are individuals who have fled persecution in their home countries because of their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs, or sexual orientation/gender identity, or who are victims of gangs, domestic violence, or other crimes, and who are seeking asylum or other special forms of immigration relief in the United States.

Most cases the Center takes are referrals from agencies that focus on immigration assistance, including HIAS Pennsylvania, Nationalities Services Center, The Amica Center, The Tahirih Justice Center, Volunteer Legal Advocates, the National Immigration Justice Center, the Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center, and Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. Referrals from these nonprofits have increased recently as they struggle with federal funding cuts.

In most cases, Center Fellows partner with attorneys, summer associates, and paralegals at Troutman Pepper Locke to represent clients. This often provides junior attorneys with early responsibility for case management, including opportunities to appear in court, with support and guidance from senior lawyers. Over the years, we have also worked with law students from the University of Pennsylvania Carey School of Law and Villanova Charles Widger School of Law.

OUR CLIENTS

Our clients come from all over the world, but the largest group of current clients are Afghans, including many who were evacuated to the United States following the collapse of the U.S.-backed Afghan government in 2021. In addition to many Afghan refugees, the Center has represented asylum seekers from numerous other countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, El Salvador, Egypt, Guatemala, Honduras, Jordan, Malawi, Mauritania, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Russia, Sudan, Senegal, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

“Their stories are heartbreaking — in many cases they’ve lost everything to come here. It’s a humanitarian crisis that calls for a lot of expertise. Asylum cases are incredibly challenging, but also very rewarding. For a lot of clients, we are all they have.”

- **Lisanne Crowley**, Fellow of The Pepper Center

Asylum applications often involve difficult legal issues — challenges that are especially daunting to refugees who have endured extraordinary trauma. Earning asylum requires establishing a credible fear of persecution if you are removed from the United States, and applicants must navigate a system with strict and ever-changing rules and requirements. Chances of earning asylum improve significantly if the individual has legal advice and representation.

The Center has successfully obtained asylum for many of our clients over these 10 years. And that is true for numerous Afghan clients, although many others are still waiting for action on their applications despite Congress requiring USCIS to make decisions on Afghan asylum applications within 150 days. In a notable victory in 2024, we filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey seeking a court order requiring USCIS to adjudicate the applications of three Afghan refugee clients, which resulted in favorable asylum decisions for those clients.

REPRESENTATIVE CASES

- We represented family members of a former Afghan Special Forces colonel who were sponsored and housed by a suburban Philadelphia church as they waited for their asylum case to be heard. The family successfully obtained asylum, and were so grateful that they gifted their attorneys an Afghan rug.
- We obtained a significant victory for H.A.V.S., an LGBTQ citizen of El Salvador, who obtained asylum after fleeing a lifetime of brutal physical and emotional abuse on account of his sexual identity. Following H.A.V.S.’s asylum victory in immigration court, his two young daughters became eligible for derivative asylum with their mother and are living in California. We assisted H.A.V.S. with both his green card application and derivative asylum petitions and were successful with both. As a testament to the power of a large firm like Troutman Pepper Locke, we were able to bring in a new California team member on short notice to help us represent the client at his USCIS interview in San Bernadino, CA.

Associate Taylor Henderson and Fellow Andy Rogoff with clients (in center) after successful asylum trial.



Client returning to India to visit elderly mother after 10 years



- We have taken on several U visa cases — a special form of relief available to victims of certain violent crimes committed in the United States who have assisted law enforcement in their investigation and prosecution. We have been representing a domestic violence survivor who not only obtained her U visa but now has also received an adjustment of status (green card), which enabled her to finally travel back to her home country of India to visit her elderly mother for the first time in 10 years.
- Another testament to perseverance involves J.F. and V.P., a couple from Haiti who sought asylum in 2017 because of death threats made to them in the course of political and religious persecution. They initially lost in USCIS proceedings, but ably represented by former and current firm associates, and under the close supervision and participation by a Pepper Center Fellow, they ultimately prevailed, and a judge granted both asylum. Both are now well on their way to earning permanent residency, with V.P. earning her nursing degree and J.F. starting a construction business.
- We obtained asylum in 2024 for a woman from Jordan who was forced to flee her abusive husband and seek refuge for herself and her children in the United States. Although she sought help from the Jordanian authorities on multiple occasions, the client was told to reconcile with her husband and discouraged from pursuing legal action. It wasn't until her arrival in the U.S. in 2019 that she had a meaningful opportunity to escape her abuser and build a better life for herself and her children. In addition to the woman's powerful testimony, an expert witness produced a detailed report confirming that Jordanian officials would do nothing to help the woman if she returned to that country, which was crucial in the immigration judge's decision to grant asylum.
- Our team earlier this year obtained a grant of protection under the United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) for a Nigerian client from the Board of Immigration Appeals.

“Our clients don’t fit the stereotypes that drive so much of the debate about immigration. Most have endured unspeakable situations — enslavement, gang violence, torture — and are seeking to vindicate their rights under American law through the immigration system. They typically work lawfully, pay taxes, follow the rules, and are vital contributors to their communities.”

- **Andy Rogoff**, Fellow of The Pepper Center

- In January, we obtained a favorable decision from the Third Circuit for a green card holder from Kenya who faced removal for a conviction for fleeing a police officer. The court held the offense was not a “crime involving moral turpitude” that would justify removal.
- We are representing an LGBTQ refugee from Benin who was assaulted by members of her family’s fundamentalist church due to her sexual orientation. Her family turned against her, and police provided no protection.
- We recently filed an amicus brief on behalf of HIAS Pennsylvania in a Third Circuit case about whether the Equal Access to Justice Act authorizes fee recovery against the government in immigration habeas petitions.
- We have two current T visa cases — another special form of relief for victims of human trafficking. One is for an LGBTQ individual from Sierra Leone who survived a horrific labor trafficking situation, and the other is for a Ukrainian victim of labor trafficking.

Client, witness, and trial team led by Fellow Lisanne Crowley after asylum granted, May 2023



Education

Since The Pepper Center's founding, public education has been of more interest to Center Fellows than any other area. As a result, when we started, we spoke with a long list of experts. Now, we are fortunate to work with several of them. During this first decade, our focus has been on two projects. Using our newfound knowledge and experience, we look forward to continuing them, as well as taking on new ones.

“The Pepper Center for Public Service has been an extraordinary partner and force for good in the The School District of Philadelphia. Because of their vision and commitment to bring Thread to Philadelphia, we are now launching a transformative partnership that will connect siloed systems across the city to better support our most at-risk students and the broader Philadelphia community. Their dedication is also why the District's Law and Justice Mentoring Program is proudly entering its fifth year — connecting students with lawyers, advocates, and mentors, and opening doors to law schools, courtrooms, and the legal profession in ways that expand both access and aspiration. The Pepper Center doesn't just talk about service — they live it. Their passion, generosity, and belief in our students continue to create real, lasting impact across our schools and communities. We are profoundly grateful for their leadership, their partnership, and their heart for Philadelphia.”

- **Ayana Lewis**, Executive Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, The School District of Philadelphia

THREAD

When The Pepper Center began meeting with educational experts nearly a decade ago, we would always ask what are the unsolved problems in public education? Most experts agreed on the most vexing issue: young people failing or dropping out of school in ninth grade who then became lost to the streets or worse. They also thought that there was no solution to this problem. Then “[For Vulnerable Teenagers, a Web of Support](#)” and “[How a Tapestry of Care Helps Teens Succeed](#)” appeared in *The New York Times* about a nonprofit organization in Baltimore that had considerable success in addressing this problem. That was [Thread](#).

As *The Times* reported, Thread had achieved extraordinary success with at-risk high school students by partnering with university and community volunteers and Baltimore schools to reconfigure (and sometimes build from the ground up) the social support structure for those students. Thread enrolls the lowest-performing ninth-grade students at the lowest-performing Baltimore public schools who face an abundance of challenges in and out of the classroom and creates an extended family of volunteers and other supporters — or “threads” — to support those students for the next 10 years, no matter what. Most end up graduating high school, and go on to college or successful jobs.

After *The New York Times* published its stories about Thread, not surprisingly, it was difficult to get a meeting with Thread. However, we knew someone who knew someone who knew Sarah Hemminger, Thread’s Co-Founder and President/CEO and she agreed to visit with The Center in Philadelphia. We invited several experts we had already met with and others that we knew to listen to the Thread story, as we did not have the expertise to evaluate it. After that meeting, we all agreed that Thread seemed to have solved the unsolved problem for the vast majority of its students and we should, with those we invited to the meeting, investigate further; if Thread was as successful as it appeared, we wanted to work to have Thread in Philadelphia.

That was the beginning of a seven-year relationship between Thread and The Pepper Center which continues today. When we met in November 2018, Thread was not considering expansion. But working together with Thread and others — including The School District of Philadelphia, PHENND, Temple University, and several foundations — and even though 40 cities were asking Thread to come to their schools — Thread is on the precipice of coming to Philadelphia. Thanks to the doggedness of our Fellows and community partners, and although it is not a “done deal” — there is still work to do and funds to be raised — the hope is for Thread to be in its first Philadelphia high school starting in the Fall of 2026. Fingers crossed.

“When I became a Fellow, as a finance and corporate lawyer, I wasn’t sure what I could bring to The Pepper Center, but when I learned about Thread, I was hooked. Not only does Thread change the lives of the students and their families, but it addresses many other community issues that have proven insoluble, e.g., drug addiction, gun violence and incarceration. Then I met Sarah Hemminger. Sarah’s insight, proven and scalable success, and indomitable spirit no matter the obstacle, is infectious. And after that, at a fundraiser, I met four adults who were Thread graduates. Each one had benefited immensely from Thread and credits the life they are living with having participated in Thread. This magic brings joy to me every day and lights my passion to bring Thread to Philadelphia.”

- Lisa Kabnick, Fellow of The Pepper Center

“It’s become very personal to me, as a teacher in this city, to make a difference in the lives of these students, and the Thread program could be a real game changer. If we can continue to improve attendance, improve participation in school, improve graduation rates, their chances of a successful and happy life go up dramatically. The challenges are huge, but what The Pepper Center is doing with Thread is an amazing thing, and I’m very grateful for their leadership and support.”

- Tomàs Hanna, Associate Superintendent for Secondary Schools, The School District of Philadelphia, who oversees nearly 60 high schools serving more than 40,000 students

LAW AND JUSTICE MENTORING PROGRAM

As a result of our partnership with The Philadelphia School District on Thread, the District's Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships asked us to help develop a high school program focused on connecting students to prelaw opportunities and mentorship to which they would not otherwise have access. The idea: an in-school component, internships and a mentoring program.

The Center enthusiastically took on the project and deployed a team of 10 Fellows to interview people who could provide helpful information to design the program. Working then with the School District and based on the information gained through the interviews, the Law and Justice Mentoring Program (LJMP) began. It consists of a semester-long program, where students learn about and discuss legal issues and meet with lawyers, judges, and other experts; participate in summer internships; and receive coaching from The Pepper Center Fellows.

LJMP students outside Penn Law School



“Throughout the program, I learned that there is always someone who will support you no matter what... While I was out of school for the internship, I had incredible mentors. I found them quite meaningful.”

- Law and Justice Mentoring Program student participant

LJMP at U.S. Court of Appeals with Judge L. Felipe Restrepo



LAW AND JUSTICE MENTORING PROGRAM (CONT.)

The Law and Justice Mentoring Program is our best example of how the Fellows' seasoned relationships and connections have made a difference. For example, the volunteer teacher of the program was recruited to the program by a Fellow who worked with her at the University of Pennsylvania Law School before she went on to teach high school for a few years and then retired; almost all of the speakers with whom the students have met are the result of relationships that the Fellows had, including meeting each year with a Third Circuit judge; and the internships are the product of the contacts and relationships that Fellows have developed over the years.

Since its inception in 2022, the LJMP has engaged nearly 100 students from two Philadelphia high schools. Over time, new "partners," including Heights Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Bar Foundation, have been recruited to help sustain the program and help improve it in a variety of ways. In our fifth year, the program expands by bringing together 25 students from four high schools for six all-day sessions during the school year. The program will be centered at Troutman Pepper Locke's Philadelphia office, and the students will have trips to the University of Pennsylvania Carey School of Law, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, and the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas — the trial court — where they will meet with Administrative Judge Dan Anders, a former lawyer at the legacy Pepper firm. In addition, this year, we are hopefully bringing in a new partner to provide a 10-year high-school-to-college-and-beyond mentoring program, which resulted from the contacts made at the University of Pennsylvania law school.

Penn Law Students speaking with LJMP students



Fellows working with this program have had the opportunity to meet and get to know the students. While not every relationship has been equally meaningful, both students and Fellows have benefited and learned. As we move into this new phase of the program, we hope that the students will spend more time with Fellows during the year to allow for deepening of relationships.

"I enjoyed how interactive it was and how their main focus point was to give us experience and talk to people with experience in the legal field."

- Law and Justice Mentoring Program student participant

Civics

“I found our work with the Task Force for American Democracy challenging, interesting and worthwhile. Protecting the elections, the rule of law and democracy is critical, and I was really glad that the Center could contribute to this effort.”

- **Cary S. Levinson**, Board Chair, Pepper Center

ELECTION PROTECTION

Voter education and protection of the right to vote were identified as critical issues at the Center's founding, and Center Fellows have continued to be active in this area ever since, with a particularly notable push during the pandemic in 2020, when Pennsylvania held its first election with mail-in ballots. Center Fellows, working with the Firm and another firm, enlisted in a matter of days 300 volunteers who were taught PA election law, so they could answer questions on the hotline of the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights for the month before the election. The volunteers helped thousands of voters in 2020, and the Firm and The Pepper Center worked on the hotline again in 2022 and 2024.

In 2024, the Center led the Pennsylvania effort of the American Bar Association's Task Force for American Democracy. This opportunity arose because one of the Fellows read about the Task Force and asked another Fellow if he knew anyone involved at ABA; that Fellow knew the then ABA President and made an introduction. Relying on our many connections, some that we had from our careers, some that we had made during the election work in 2020 and 2022, the Fellows recruited and organized about 200 volunteers across the state not already involved in election protection efforts, and then worked with Pennsylvania nonpartisan organizations to deploy them where they were needed, including 50-plus poll workers to whom we and nonpartisan organizations provided training and support.

Since 2020, Center Fellows have worked on a number of additional election protection issues with a variety of organizations, often working with associates to provide advice and counsel. And, the Center is continuing its collaboration with the Task Force for American Democracy, now a nonpartisan organization dedicated to educating the public on the principles of American democracy and deepening their presence in American culture.

DURABLE FORUM ON RACE IN AMERICA

In 2020, the Fellows committed to a year of study focused on race in America. Five years later, with consistent programming and discussions determined by Fellows, that study continues, and does not have an end in sight. That is very much because there is so much to learn, from slavery to the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights movement, reparations, our criminal justice system and policing, our American Indian history, the history of other groups in our country, and the list goes on. While generally our discussions are among ourselves, we did a CLE series for the Firm on issues surrounding American Indian law.

Our study and discussions are helpful in doing our work and understanding the world around us. We never find ourselves running out of what to read or study; there is always more. And the discussions themselves are so rich, civil and honest that they further cement the relationships among Fellows.

Meeting with Experts and Civic Leaders

On November 15, 2015, then Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter met with the small band of partners and counsel forming The Pepper Center at their very first meeting. Inspired by his words, we have met with more than 50 experts and civic leaders since. And, as a perfect salute to that very first meeting, in June 2024 we kicked off a new series of “Meet the Mayors,” when we met with Philadelphia’s Mayor Cherelle Parker. Mayor Parker answered questions that the Fellows had posed to her about concerns common to our Fellows’ cities, in addition to sharing her views on a host of issues. It was an interesting and well-appreciated session. We look forward to hearing from other mayors and civic leaders in the years ahead.

Pepper Center Meeting with Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf



Speakers at The Pepper Center over the Past Ten Years

Lists reflect positions speakers held at the time of our meetings.

CIVICS

Tom Wolf, *Governor of Pennsylvania*

Ed Rendell, *former Governor of Pennsylvania and Mayor of Philadelphia*

Michael Nutter, *Mayor of Philadelphia*

Cherelle Parker, *Mayor of Philadelphia*

Marc Freedman, *President/CEO, Encore.org; Founder, Civic Ventures*

Ezra Rosenberg, *Co-Director of the Voting Rights Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights*

Helen Gym, *Philadelphia Councilwoman*

Sozi P. Tulante, *City Solicitor, City of Philadelphia*

Liz Joyner, *Executive Director, Village Square*

Lewis Rosman, *Philadelphia City Solicitor's Office*

Shaquita Smith, *Social Studies Specialist, Philadelphia School District*

Chris Satullo, *Keystone Civic Ventures LLC; Penn Project for Civic Engagement*

Harris Sokoloff, *Paideia Program, University of Pennsylvania*

Mimi McKenzie, *Legal Director, The Public Interest Law Center*

Nancy Wang, *Executive Director, Voters Not Politicians*

EDUCATION

James Liebman, *Professor and Director, Center for Public Research and Leadership, Columbia Law School*

Dale Russakoff, *Reporter and Author – The Prize*

Dale Mezzacappa, *Reporter/Editor, The Notebook*

Michael Schwartz, *Partner, Troutman Pepper Locke*

Martha Woodall, *Reporter, The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Estelle Richman, *most recently Chair, Philadelphia School Reform Commission; former COO and Acting Deputy Secretary of HUD; Secretary of PA Department of Public Welfare; Managing Director, City of Philadelphia; Philadelphia Commissioner of Public Health*

William Hite, *Superintendent, Philadelphia School District*

Naomi Wyatt, *Chief of Staff, Philadelphia School District*

Donna Cooper, *Executive Director of Public Citizens for Children and Youth*

Marjorie Neff, *Philadelphia School Reform Commission and former principal, Masterman High School*

Sarah Hemminger, *CEO and Co-Founder, Thread*

Nikhil Gupta, *Director of Strategic Expansion, Thread*

Otis Hackney, *Chief Education Officer, Philadelphia Mayor's Office*

Vicki Ellis, Ayana Lewis, and Sydney Edelson, *Office of Strategic Partnerships, Philadelphia School District*

Hillary Kane and Caitlin Fritz, *Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND)*

IMMIGRATION

William Stock, *President of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and a founder of Klasko Immigration Law Partners*

Ayodelle Gansallo, *Senior Staff Attorney, HIAS Pennsylvania, and adjunct faculty, Transnational Legal Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania Law School*

John Whitelaw, *Community Legal Services*

Dale Russakoff, *"No Sanctuary," The Philadelphia Inquirer and Pro Publica*

Ryan Brunsink, *Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center (PIRC)*

GUN VIOLENCE

Shira Goodman, *Executive Director of CeaseFirePA*

John Rosenthal, *Co-founder of Stop Handgun Violence (Boston, MA)*

Brad Richman, *Senior Counsel at McNelly Goldstein (representing the National Rifle Association)*

POVERTY AND HEALTH

Sheldon Danziger, *President, Russell Sage Foundation*

Michael R. Strain, *Director of Economic Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute*

H. Luke Schaefer, *Co-author, \$2.00 a Day, Living on Almost Nothing in America; Associate Professor of Social Work and Public Policy, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan*

Mitch Little, *Executive Director, Philadelphia Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity*

Laval Miller-Wilson, *Executive Director, Pennsylvania Health Law Project*

Rasheedah Phillips, *Managing Attorney, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia*

Mark Schwartz, *Executive Director of Regional Housing Legal Services*

Dina Schlossberg, *Deputy Director/Senior Attorney for Multifamily Housing, Regional Housing Legal Services*

Sister Mary Scullion, *President and Executive Director, Project HOME*

Larry Schweiger, *President and CEO, PennFuture*

Dr. Jeffrey Brenner, *Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers*

Wendy Ruderman and Barbara Laker, *Pulitzer Prize winning reporters for the Philadelphia Daily News, and authors of "Toxic City"*

Richard Pepino, *Professor, University of Pennsylvania*

John Dernbach, *Professor of Environmental Law and Sustainability, Widener University*

In Memoriam

Sadly, we lost two colleagues since our last report.

Michael I. Days died on October 18, 2025 at the age of 72. Mike was an outstanding journalist, serving for more than 25 years as managing editor and then editor of the *Philadelphia Daily News* and as managing editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Mike played a critical role in Philadelphia and the nation's journalism; his death was announced on the [front page](#) of *The Inquirer* and the man that he was is reflected in two *Inquirer* columns, one written by [Jenice Armstrong](#) and the other by [Paul Davies](#). He was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the National Association of Black Journalists, and was the founding president of its Philadelphia chapter. He also was the former president of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists and was the recipient of numerous awards for his journalism. He wrote [Obama's Legacy: What He Accomplished As President](#), which was published just ahead of the 2016 election. After Mike retired, he joined the Center as a Fellow, our one and only non-lawyer member, and participated in many of our discussions and was a great thought partner. He always had something important to share. He will be greatly missed.

William N. (Bill) Withrow, a Board member of The Pepper Center and partner from legacy firm Troutman Pepper, died in 2023 at age 68. Bill was a celebrated trial lawyer and beloved friend and mentor to his colleagues at the Firm during his 43-year career, and an active Board member and supporter of The Pepper Center. At various times during his career at Troutman Sanders and then Troutman Pepper, he chaired the Firm's litigation department, was a member of the executive committee, and served as the managing partner of the Firm's Chicago office. We had hoped, as Bill did, that he would join us as an active Fellow upon retirement. We remain deeply saddened that he died shortly before his planned retirement.

Conclusion

The past 10 years have been both challenging and rewarding. As we move ahead, we look forward to working with purpose, together and with others, to make our communities even just a little bit better.

Tom Cole and Amy Ginensky accepting the Philadelphia Bar Foundation Law Firm of the Year Award for the Creation and Work of The Pepper Center



The Board of The Pepper Center includes retired and current senior partners and counsel, and members of Troutman Pepper Locke's management:

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Nicholas M. Kouletsis	David Wormser
Bryan B. Lavine	Kenneth H. Zucker
George A. Lehner	<i>Pepper Center Chief of Staff:</i>
Murray S. Levin	Mary Pat Walsh
Jan P. Levine	

**Not affiliated with Troutman Pepper Locke*

Task Force Members + Community Partners

The following pages list participants in the Center's various task forces and projects. It is undoubtedly an incomplete accounting — there are many others who helped us in ways large and small. We are grateful to all of them.

Immigration

IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE

Fellows

Sam Abate	Gregory Narsh
Lisanne Crowley	Mark Newman
Barbara Etkind	Andrew Rogoff
Donna Fisher	Ron Ross
Nina Gussack	Thomas B. Schmidt, III
Solomon Hunter	Anthony Vale
Anthony Kaye	Ken Zucker
George Lehner	

“One of the most rewarding aspects of this work is watching the professional growth of young associates — they get terrific hands-on experience in these cases that otherwise is very difficult to come by early in a legal career.”

- **Tony Vale**, Fellow of The Pepper Center

Troutman Pepper Locke Volunteers

Olanike Akande	Noland Butler
Zie Alere	Samir Cadavid
Victoria Alvarez	Madeline Cane
Christina Anton	Amita Chohan
Alejandra Aponte	Joanna Cline
Dan Archuleta	Rosemary Cochrane
Jackie K. Arnold	Amie Colby
Batul Ather	Michaela Conley
Jenna Autry	Zach Corenblum
Savannah Billingham-Hemming	Peter Cox
Bryan Boccelli	Karli Cozen
Kim Boring	Matt Cossu
Chelsea Brewer	Sean Craig
Brett Broczkowski	Nicole Crossey
Samantha Burdick	Sophia Dauria
Maggie Burnside	Quintessa Davis
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Troutman Pepper Locke Volunteers (cont.)

[illegible]

Education

EDUCATION TASK FORCE

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Lisa Kabnick	Rebecca Ross
Murray Levin	Thomas B. Schmidt, III
Cary Levinson	Joseph Sullivan
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Amy Ginensky	David Richman
Lisa Kabnick	Andrew Rogoff
Murray Levin	Rebecca Ross
Cary Levinson	Joseph Sullivan
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Community Partners

The Philadelphia School District, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Ayana Lewis, Executive Director and Leah Hood, Partnerships Coordinator

Anne Kringel, J.D., retired educator, University of Pennsylvania Law School and Philadelphia School District, Academy at Palumbo

Kensington Health Sciences Academy, Principal Nimet Eren and teacher Kristian Ogungbemi

Heights Philadelphia, Chris Avery, Vice President, and Rachel Toliver, Sarah DeAngelis and, formerly of Heights, Judith Snow and Brittney Gilbert

Philadelphia Bar Foundation, Jessica Hilburn-Holmes, Executive Director and Paul Kirk, Director of Operations

University of Pennsylvania Carey School of Law, Yolanda Ingram, Director of Law School Education Programs, and Jennifer Pierce, Associate Director of Pro Bono Projects

*Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, Judge Dan Anders
Federal Court for the Third Circuit, Judge Felipe Restrepo
Lincoln High School, Law Teacher Rachel Newman*

Internship Hosts

CeaseFire PA	Public Interest Law Center
HIAS PA	Regional Housing Legal Services
Homeless Advocacy Project	The Pennsylvania Innocence Project
Law Department of the City of Philadelphia	Troutman Pepper Locke
Philadelphia Legal Assistance	

Troutman Pepper Locke Volunteers

Pro Bono Department: Sara Richman, *Chair of Pro Bono*;
Donna Hendrickson, *Senior Pro Bono Coordinator*

Inclusion Department: Erin Cannon, *Director*;
Kate Haeffner, *Manager*

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Community Partners

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PSD Office of Strategic Partnerships, Ayana Lewis, Executive Director, and Severin Tucker, Assistant Director

Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND), Hillary Kane, Executive Director

Temple University, Jodi Bailey-Accavallo, Vice President for Student Affairs and Juliet Curci, Assistant Dean, College of Education and Human Development

Governor Edward Rendell

Philadelphia Foundation, Pedro Ramos, Leann Ayers, Phil Fitzgerald, Angie Pabon

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Civics

CIVICS TASK FORCE

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George Lehner	Joseph Sullivan
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Election Protection and Rule of Law Teams

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Community Partners

Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights	Public Interest Law Center
ACLU PA	Task Force for American Democracy
Common Cause PA	Philadelphia Bar Association
Committee of 70	Pennsylvania Bar Association
Resolve Philly	Blank Rome
Philadelphia School District	

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Matthew Griffin	Robin Sumner
Joseph Harrington	Stephany Tang
Meghan Harrison	Mary Pat Walsh
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DURABLE FORUM ON RACE IN AMERICA

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Amy Ginensky	Robert Ludolph	David Richman	Thomas Wilczak
Nina Gussack	James Murray	Andy Rogoff	Thomas Zemaitis
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Race In America Book Discussion Group

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Margaret Ann Brown	Amy Ginensky	James Murray	Ronald Ross
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Michael Coleman	Nina Gussack	Mark Newman	Joseph Serritella
Julie Corelli	Solomon Hunter	Pamela Palmer	Joseph Sullivan
Lisanne Crowley	Lisa Kabnick	Janet Perry	Anthony Vale
Brad Davenport	Neil Kessler	Lisa Petkun	Erik Videlock
Michael Days	George Lehner	Paul Porretta	Thomas Wilczak
Matthew DelDuca	Jan Levine	Michael Reed	Thomas Zemaitis
Barbara Etkind	Cary Levinson	David Richman	Kenneth Zucker



Troutman Pepper Locke helps clients solve complex legal challenges and achieve their business goals in an ever-changing global economy. With more than 1,600 attorneys in 30+ offices, the firm serves clients in all major industry sectors, with particular depth in energy, financial services, health care and life sciences, insurance and reinsurance, private equity, and real estate. Learn more at **troutman.com**.