

The 2020 Adams Pro Bono Publico Awards

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services

Nomination Guidelines

Overview

The Supreme Judicial Court Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services (Committee) presents the Adams Pro Bono Publico Awards (Adams Awards) each year. Named for attorneys John Adams and John Quincy Adams, the Adams Awards honor Massachusetts lawyers, law students, law firms, and legal organizations that have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to providing pro bono services for the benefit of individuals of limited means. Award recipients will be celebrated at the Adams Award Ceremony on Wednesday, October 28, 2020.

To learn more about the Adams Awards, and about how to nominate a potential recipient, please review the information below. The Committee encourages the submission of nominations that reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth's residents. Please note that the deadline for nominations is Friday, August 21, 2020.

How Are Awardees Selected?

Recipients may be honored for exceptional pro bono service during the year prior to the award ceremony or for exceptional devotion to providing pro bono services over time, including the year prior to the award. They also may be honored for service performed across multiple pro bono cases or activities.

By way of example, service worthy of an Adams Award may include, but is not limited to:

- The creation or participation in an activity or pro bono program that expands legal services to underserved segments of the population or fills a previously unmet need;
- Significant work on litigation, the outcome of which benefits persons of limited means;
- Significant work on the adoption of legislation or policies that benefit individuals of limited means.

As long as a nominee is based in Massachusetts, the nominee's service may be provided in or beyond Massachusetts. Individual attorneys, law students, and legal organizations (including corporate law departments, government attorney offices, law firms of any size, and law schools) are eligible.

Current members of the Committee are not eligible for an Adams Award.

What is Pro Bono Service?

The Adams Award celebrates (1) "pro bono legal services" provided by lawyers and legal organizations, and (2) "law-related pro bono service" provided by law students.

Pro Bono Legal Services

For the purpose of the Adams Award, the meaning of “**pro bono legal services**” is derived from Rule 6.1(a) of the Massachusetts Rules of Professional Conduct. As such, “pro bono legal services” means:

Legal services that are provided “without compensation or expectation of compensation to persons of limited means, or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters that are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.”

In keeping with Rule 6.1(a), “pro bono legal services” include “activities for improving the law, the legal system, or the legal profession that are primarily intended to benefit persons of limited means.” (*See* Rule 6.1, Comments 4 and 5). For such services to be relevant for the Adams Award, however, they must be provided without compensation or expectation of compensation. For further guidance on the meaning and the scope of “pro bono legal services,” please consult the comments to Rule 6.1(a).

Law-Related Pro Bono Service

For the purpose of the Adams Award, “law-related pro bono services” are defined as:

Work performed, without compensation or academic credit or expectation of compensation or academic credit, to support or assist in the provision of “pro bono legal services,” as defined above.

By way of example, the following activities qualify as law-related pro bono services when performed without compensation or academic credit, or the expectation of compensation or academic credit:

- Assisting an attorney with a pro bono case;
- Assisting self-represented litigants in court;
- Conducting client or witness interviews and investigations for a pro bono case;
- Drafting documents for a pro bono case;
- Preparing a pro bono case for trial;
- Conducting legal research or writing for a pro bono case or activity;
- Drafting an amicus brief for pro bono case or activity; and
- Work performed during an unpaid legal internship (full-time or part-time) at a pro bono or legal services program primarily intended to benefit persons of limited means.

Conversely, the following activities do not meet the criteria for “law-related pro bono services”:

- Academic coursework;
- Work for a school-based clinical program;
- An internship or any legal work for which the student receives academic credit or pay;
- Pro bono work performed at a law firm as part of a paid summer internship or associate position;
- A judicial internship, externship or summer clerkship (paid or unpaid);
- Non-legal volunteer or community service work; and
- Training, transportation, and observation.

That said, if a student exceeds the number of hours required to receive academic credit for a clinical program, internship or other legal work, those hours qualify as “law-related pro bono legal services.”

Guidelines for Compiling a Nomination Packet

To nominate a **lawyer, law student or legal organization** for the Adams Award, please submit the following:

- Your email address and phone number.
- A letter that describes the nominee's pro bono service in detail and identifies those who have benefited from it.
- Up to three letters of support from other individuals and organizations who are aware of the candidate's pro bono contribution(s). If possible, please include a letter from a beneficiary of the candidate's pro bono service.

If you are nominating an **attorney**, please include the nominee's resume if possible. In addition, please provide the following information about the nominee (if it is not included in the resume) if possible:

- An email address and phone number;
- Principal areas of practice;
- Number of years practicing law;
- Number of hours of pro bono legal services contributed in the calendar year preceding the nomination;
- Number of hours of pro bono legal services, as defined above, contributed during the candidate's career and/or the number of years the candidate has been providing pro bono services;
- Other public service contributions; and
- Educational background.

If you are nominating a **law student**, please include the nominee's resume if possible. In addition, please provide the following information about the nominee (if it is not included in the resume) if possible:

- An email address and phone number;
- Year in law school (e.g., 2L, 3L);
- Number of hours of law-related bono services, as defined above, contributed during the candidate's law-school career;
- Other public service contributions; and
- Educational background.

If you are nominating a **legal organization**, please include the name, email address, and phone number for a contact individual at the organization. If it is available, please also provide a brief description of the organization's mission, practices areas, and client base or populations served, as well as any other information that may be relevant to the Adams Awards selection criteria described above.

Nominations submitted in 2019 will remain active for consideration in 2020, provided that the nominator submits a new letter re-nominating the candidate and updates the nomination packet with any relevant information.

Submission Instructions

Please submit nominations and all supporting materials by Friday, August 21, 2020 by email to mb.sjcprobono@jud.state.ma.us, referencing 2020 Adams Awards in the subject line, or by mail to Chip Phinney, Deputy Legal Counsel, Supreme Judicial Court, John Adams Courthouse, Suite 2500, One Pemberton Square, Boston, MA 02108.