

Spotlight on...Nareeneh Sohbatian, Winston & Strawn Immigration Pro Bono Supervisory Attorney

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In this Spotlight Q&A, Winston & Strawn Immigration Pro Bono Supervisory Attorney Nareeneh Sohbatian shares insights on the firm's Immigration Pro Bono Project.

Why Winston? What attracted you to this role and to the firm?

As a former managing attorney at an immigration nonprofit, I was drawn to Winston and this position for several reasons. At a time when many individuals need access to immigration representation most, Winston is one of the few law firms that has identified a problem in the pro bono/nonprofit world. As a result, the firm created an Immigration Pro Bono Project, an internal resource that identifies and places innovative immigration matters with pro bono lawyers. My position is unique in that it provides assistance to our lawyers who take on immigration pro bono matters. As such, nonprofit agencies referring cases can rely on our team to provide mentorship and assistance throughout the process.

The Pro Bono team has expanded over the last few years. Tell us more about your role.

My role as Winston's Immigration Pro Bono Supervisory Attorney is housed within our Pro Bono Department. I work under Pro Bono Counsel [Maria Kutnick](#), who also has an immigration background. Together we created and oversee Winston's Immigration Pro Bono Project. After engagement of matters, the project provides teams with in-house immigration expertise, internal tools to improve the efficiency and management of immigration matters, trainings, and mentorship and supervision of immigration pro bono cases.

As the firm's only Immigration Pro Bono Supervisory Attorney, I orient our attorneys on the relevant immigration laws and policies pertaining to the type of immigration case they have selected. I also host weekly office hours to provide immediate assistance on cases and answer immigration related questions. I provide research assistance, offer feedback on filings, and prepare teams for immigration trials and United States Immigration and Citizenship Services (USCIS) interviews. Across the firm, we currently have over two hundred open immigration matters.

In 2017, with our Docket department, we created and launched a system using federal immigration rules and policies to calendar important deadlines and reminders for our teams. Additionally, I maintain my own immigration pro bono case load, consisting of large scale research projects and filings, such as amicus briefs in federal circuit courts and immigration law manuals, and direct representation in affirmative and defensive immigration cases, such as asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, U and T visas, and adjustment of status applications.

What is the most interesting pro bono case you have worked on to date?

All of the immigration pro bono work we do is interesting and compelling. My position is particularly unique because I work with teams that take on immigration pro bono cases out of all of our domestic offices. Immigration law varies from federal circuit to circuit, and assisting our teams in identifying ways to address the issues inherent in their individual cases is of particular interest to me.

Any tips to lawyers looking to get involved in rewarding pro bono cases?

Working on immigration pro bono cases is a wonderful way to provide assistance to those who have often encountered very difficult circumstances. Our immigration pro bono project provides attorneys with the necessary tools to effectively represent their clients, without feeling overwhelmed by the current speed at which immigration laws, policies, and procedures are changing.

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