

## Winston & Strawn, The Legal Aid Society File Class Action Discrimination Lawsuit Against Port Authority Police Department

MARCH 28, 2017

**NEW YORK** – Winston & Strawn LLP and The Legal Aid Society filed a lawsuit in federal court today against the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) charging discrimination, targeting, and false arrests of men using restrooms within the Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT). Filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, the suit states that PAPD officers engage in a pattern and practice of targeting men perceived as gay, or gender or non-conforming, on baseless charges including public lewdness and exposure.

“These tactics cannot – and will not – stand. They are deplorable indicia of a department that cares not about law or liberty, violating both with baseless abandon,” said Thomas Patrick Lane, partner with Winston & Strawn, which is filing the suit as a pro bono partner with The Legal Aid Society. “The use of police assets and resources in this unconstitutional and unconscionable way is particularly stunning in light of the world in which we live.”

“The Port Authority Police Department was found liable for this exact behavior in 2005 and they’ve made absolutely zero effort to correct their practices or even hold the officers accountable who committed these acts of unrepentant discrimination,” said Kim Forte, Supervising Attorney of the LGBT Law and Policy Initiative at The Legal Aid Society. “Let this lawsuit and our client testimonials again prove that PAPD is overzealously profiling and arresting innocent men in these situations solely based on their appearance.”

According to the complaint, PAPD officers are making targeted arrests on the discriminatory basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and to boost “quality of life” arrest statistics. The PAPD have continued to make such targeted arrests knowing or believing that most of those arrested will ultimately be forced to plead to lesser charges to avoid public embarrassment and humiliation, costly legal fees, and jail sentences, as well as reputational and professional harm associated with the false charges, the suit explained.

The plaintiffs are seeking injunctive relief, as well as compensatory and punitive damages, among other recompenses.

The Legal Aid Society legal team included Tina Luongo, William Gibney, Kimberly Forte and Cynthia Conti-Cook. The Winston & Strawn legal team included Thomas Patrick Lane, Michael S. Elkin, and Dorian S. Thomas.

The Legal Aid Society is a private, not-for-profit legal services organization, the oldest and largest in the nation, dedicated since 1876 to providing quality legal representation to low-income New Yorkers. It is dedicated to one

simple but powerful belief: that no New Yorker should be denied access to justice because of poverty.

2 Min Read

---

## Related Locations

New York

## Related Topics

Pro Bono

Discrimination Class Action

LGBTQ+

PBIA

## Related Capabilities

Class Actions & Group Litigation

## Related Regions

North America

## Related Professionals

---



Michael Elkin