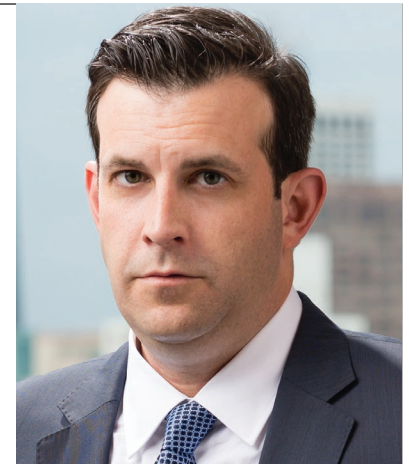


TRAILBLAZERS

LITIGATION

ANDREW VAIL
JENNER & BLOCK



What was the genesis of the idea/path that has made you a trailblazer?

What makes me a trailblazer is listening to the client to understand their ideas, goals, and challenges to seek remedy through the legal system. In the case of Patrick Pursley, our client had steadfastly maintained that he had not committed the crime for which he was convicted and that a reexamination of the ballistics evidence would ultimately establish his innocence. Learning as much about the subject matter as possible, I worked with some of the foremost experts on the subject and became intimately familiar with firearm evidence so that we could best advocate for Patrick based on science.

What sort of change has resulted from the concept?

As a result of gaining deep knowledge about our client and the subject matter, Patrick's case had set precedent for the ability to seek post-conviction testing of ballistics evidence under the Illinois Post Conviction Act, including by succeeding on appeal when the trial court initially denied the request for testing. We also exposed significant concerns in the way his case was handled by the local and state police and county prosecutors.

What bearing will this have on the future?

As an initial matter, Patrick has been freed from his wrongful incarceration of life in prison to return to society and make positive contributions, including to focus on at-risk youths and spend time with his family. On a broader level, the hope is that Patrick's case is another reminder that wrongful convictions do occur; they need to be remedied, and at least in Illinois, convictions based solely on the testimony of an Illinois State Police lab technician as to the "match" of a weapon to crime scene evidence needs to be fully vetted and in line with science.