

Jenner & Block Receives Korean American Bar Association Distinguished Service Award for Koh Pro Bono Work

News

October 27, 2014

Jenner & Block received the Korean American Bar Association (KABA) of Chicago's Distinguished Service Award for its pro bono work in the highly publicized murder trial of Hyungseok Koh at the organization's 21st Annual Banquet on October 25, 2014 at the Union League Club of Chicago. The award is provided to firms for outstanding pro bono contributions. In the case, Mr. Koh was charged with the first-degree murder of his 22-year-old son, Paul Koh. After a 13-day trial, he was found not guilty. The trial included the showing of a video recorded interview of Mr. Koh, conducted by police and taped shortly after his son Paul was found dead, during which, prosecutors argued, he confessed to killing the young man. Jenner & Block's legal team was able to show the jury that Mr. Koh, a South Korean native, did not understand either the interrogation process or the questions because of language difficulties. In addition, the team presented evidence that Paul Koh had a history of mental illness and argued that not only was there no physical evidence to convict Mr. Koh but that his son's death was a suicide.

The firm's team was led by Partners Terri L. Mascherin and Andrew W. Vail and included Partner Wade A. Thomson and Associates Daniel T. Fenske and Laura E.B. Hulce.

The Illinois law requiring videotaping of custodial interrogations in homicide cases was recommended by the Illinois Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment, which was chaired by Partner Thomas P. Sullivan, under then-Gov. George Ryan. The bill was sponsored in the Illinois Assembly by then-State Senator Barack Obama.

Established in 1993, KABA includes more than 250 attorneys and law school students and provides a networking resource to its members and service to the community by hosting professional, educational, community and social events throughout the year. It also sponsors a free legal clinic in conjunction with Korean American Community Services. For more information, please visit KABA's website.

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