

Jenner & Block Team Recognized for Pro Bono Service by Eastern District of California

News

January 11, 2022

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California recently recognized Partner Kirsten Hicks Spira and Special Counsel Wesley M. Griffith as honorees for their commitment to pro bono during the District's annual "Night to Honor Service."

Spira and Griffith were recognized for leading a team that included Associates Elizabeth Avunjian, and Effiong K. Dampha in a Section 1983 civil rights case. The case arose from our client reporting several prison guards for misconduct. In retaliation, the guards took our client to an isolated area of the prison that was closed for construction and beat him until he lost consciousness. The guards denied all wrong doing, claiming that the client had instead slipped and fell to the ground during escort.

The client, who had limited education and financial means, was originally proceeding without counsel and having difficulty making his case in the face of the guards' denial of any wrongdoing. The firm team, however, was able to secure evidence from the prison confirming that our client was taken to an outside hospital by ambulance for treatment for his injuries shortly after the attack, that the area where the attack occurred had no security cameras or other safeguards to prevent abuse of prisoners by staff, and that the guards involved had coordinated their incident reports before officially filing them. Based on this evidence, the action was settled on the eve of trial on favorable terms for our client.

The Eastern District has one of the highest levels of pro se civil rights litigants in the country, and Jenner & Block lawyers have served on the District's Civil Rights Pro Bono Panel for many years.

Associates Vivian L. Bickford, Kristen Green, and Julia K. Hirata and Paralegal Christal Oropeza also supported the matter.

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