

# EXCELLENCE IN THE LAW 2021



ONLINE EVENT APRIL 8, 2021, 6:15 P.M.

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# PUBLISHER’S LETTER



Dear readers,

We hope you enjoy this special Excellence in the Law section, which recognizes a wide range of accomplishments in the Rhode Island legal community. In the pages that follow, we celebrate a diverse group of individuals chosen by a committee drawn from members of our editorial department: Lawyers of the Year, Up & Coming Lawyers, Leaders in the Law and members of our Hall of Fame, as well as our honorees for Excellence in Pro Bono and Judicial Excellence.

We had hoped to celebrate these honorees at a networking luncheon. But given the ongoing pandemic, we still cannot safely do so in person. Instead, we will host Excellence in the Law as an online event on April 8, starting at 6:15 p.m. We hope that you can join us for the program, which will feature U.S. District Court Judge Mary S. McElroy as our keynote speaker.

The pages that follow offer some insights into the honorees being celebrated. Please join me in congratulating them.

*Susan A. Bocamazo, Esq.*  
*Publisher, Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly*

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UP & COMING



CASSANDRA L. FEENEY

Associate, Adler, Cohen, Harvey, Wakeman & Guekguezian  
New England Law | Boston

As a medical-malpractice defense attorney, Cassandra L. Feeney handles cases from pre-suit investigation through trial. Her other areas of practice include product liability and toxic tort claims, and she also founded and developed new practice areas in special education and employment law for her firm's Rhode Island office.

"Being able to practice in different areas has helped me to be a better attorney," she says. "I like that every day is different and that I learn something new every day."

Feeney works to promote change on issues surrounding those who are underserved and underrepresented through her active involvement with numerous organizations in the legal community and elsewhere.

She coordinates the firm's pro bono work through the Roger Williams University

School of Law's Pro Bono Collaborative and committed over 80 hours last year to her own pro bono efforts, including working with the Rhode Island Medical-Legal Partnership at Hasbro Children's Hospital.

A member of the board of directors of Providence Community Health Centers, she was appointed to the Rhode Island Supreme Court Committee on Character and Fitness in 2019 and sits on several Rhode Island Bar Association committees, including the Superior Court Bench Bar Committee, Labor Law and Employment Committee, Federal Court Bench Bar Committee and Lawyers Helping Lawyers.

Feeney's participation with the Rhode Island Women's Bar Association, where she is the current chair of the membership committee and treasurer of the board of directors, inspired her to launch the First Women Project, an effort to identify the early women attorneys in the state.

Her research, including interviews with those attorneys, formed the basis for a law review article examining gender bias in the legal profession in Rhode Island.

"I was really proud to shine a spotlight back on this issue, which will hopefully reinvigorate our progress toward equality," she says.

This year, Feeney was selected to participate in Leadership Rhode Island's 2021 Rho II class.

"I was really proud to shine a spotlight back on this issue, which will hopefully reinvigorate our progress toward equality."

UP & COMING



GREGORY N. HOFFMAN

Attorney, Barton Gilman  
Roger Williams University School of Law

As a new associate at Barton Gilman, Gregory N. Hoffman was called on to help the firm's partners on a variety of cases. Increasingly, he found he was drawn to family law.

"I enjoyed connecting with clients on a personal basis and trying to help them solve the problems they were experiencing in their lives," he says. "The more family law cases I worked on, the more I found that my temperament and disposition work well in the domestic relations area."

A calming influence on his clients, Hoffman also appreciated that family law offered him the opportunity to get into court and argue cases as a young attorney.

"I'm a people person, and I like getting to know my clients," he says. "I love being

able to stand by my clients through difficult times and help them get to brighter futures."

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the area of family law — previously a court-intensive practice — particularly hard, however. Hoffman now finds himself outside of the courtroom trying to be productive with opposing counsel and working to resolve as many issues as possible without the need for direct judicial oversight.

"We just try to keep our cases moving so that our clients can get some certainty and finality on emotionally difficult issues," he explains. "It can be really challenging managing all of the emotions and expectations of our clients, keeping peace while working toward a resolution and dealing with a situation that is decidedly not normal."

President of the Roger Williams University School of Law Alumni Association, he also sits on the board of directors for the law school and oversees the various alumni committees.

Hoffman participates in RWU Law's Pro Bono Collaborative, working with the Bradley Hospital guardianship program to assist low-income families with special needs children to obtain guardianships when the children turn 18.

"The more family law cases I worked on, the more I found that my temperament and disposition work well in the domestic relations area."

*Barton Gilman  
is proud of our colleague*

**Gregory N. Hoffman**

*named a  
2021 Up & Coming Lawyer  
by  
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*and we congratulate all  
of the 2021 honorees.*



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UP & COMING



JOHN D. MEARA

Associate, Mandell, Boisclair & Mandell  
Roger Williams University School of Law

As a 3L at Roger Williams University School of Law, John D. Meara took an advanced trial advocacy class in which each student was assigned a former client of the professor, Mark Mandell. Meara met with the parents of a young woman who was in a vegetative state as a result of a local bar overserving a patron to the point that he subsequently drove the wrong way on I-95. “That experience had a profound impact on me,” he recalls. “It demonstrated for me the importance of doing plaintiffs’ work and the impact these cases can have on someone’s life.” Meara began his legal career primarily doing defense work. He helped draft

petitions for writ of certiorari in two cases heard by the Rhode Island Supreme Court that involved the Providence Retirement Board, and he worked on a high-profile case before the Superior Court challenging the constitutionality of a Smithfield ordinance that heavily restricted the ability of individuals to avail themselves of the state’s Medical Marijuana Act. Despite his successes, he realized he needed a better fit and switched sides of the bar. Three years ago, he joined Mandell’s firm, where he now focuses his practice on clients who have been catastrophically injured due to another’s negligence. “Working to obtain justice on behalf of my clients and provide closure to them is something I truly enjoy,” he says. “It is a weighty obligation but one that I love.” A member of the Rhode Island Association for Justice and the American Association for Justice, Meara has coached a moot court team at his alma mater since he graduated in 2011, calling it “an incredibly rewarding experience.” A board member of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Providence since 2016, he has served as president of the board for the last three years.

“Working to obtain justice on behalf of my clients and provide closure to them is something I truly enjoy.”

UP & COMING



KATHRYN M. RATTIGAN

Counsel, Robinson & Cole  
Roger Williams University School of Law

As a member of the business litigation group and data privacy and cybersecurity team at Robinson & Cole, Kathryn M. Rattigan helps her clients navigate their way through the myriad of local, state, federal and international laws and regulations on privacy. “The great thing about this practice is that I get to work with different industries and clients of all different sizes dealing with a range of issues,” she says. “One day I could be working with a startup on its privacy policies and procedures; the next, it could be a national company that suffered a data breach or an employee’s stolen laptop.” In addition, the rapidly changing area of the law keeps Rattigan on her toes as cyber threats change and the law struggles to keep up with the technology.

“Privacy means different things to different people. Some people view privacy as an absolute right, while others see it as something that must be balanced alongside other considerations,” such as free speech or national security, she says. “My passion for this field stems from the uncertainty and potential for growth and development of new policies.” Committed to giving back, Rattigan is active in the Rhode Island Bar Association, Rhode Island Women’s Bar Association, International Association of Privacy Professionals, American Health Lawyers Association and Boston Bar Association. She is the former chair of the Massachusetts Bar Association Health Law Section and an adjunct professor at Roger Williams University, where she teaches technological innovation and the law. A member of Robinson & Cole’s Women’s Committee, Wellness Committee and Hiring Committee for the National Grid Summer Fellowship, she also participates in the RCNEXT group. Rattigan volunteers with her alma mater’s Pro Bono Collaborative, serves on the advisory board for Inner Explorer, and sits on the Stonehill College Board of Fellows and President’s Advisory Council.

“My passion for this field stems from the uncertainty and potential for growth and development of new policies.”

**Congratulations to**  
**John Meara**

**On being named an**  
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UP & COMING



ADAM H. THAYER

Attorney, Sayer, Regan & Thayer  
Roger Williams University School of Law

For Adam H. Thayer, the practice of law is a family affair. He grew up hanging out at his dad’s law office, washing coffee mugs, changing light bulbs and stuffing envelopes. After graduating from law school, Thayer joined the practice and turned his focus to real estate.

“I think of myself as a fireman,” he says. “I deal with people all day, every day, and I put out fires. Legal work is an important part of my job, but so is talking through common sense solutions with my clients, as well as realtors and loan officers.”

To expand his base of business, Thayer added Connecticut and Massachusetts law licenses to his resume, which allows him to offer his services to high income clients with multiple residences in the surrounding states. He is also one of a handful of

Rhode Island attorneys approved to close SBA 504 loans.

Even the COVID-19 pandemic hasn’t slowed down the growth of the real estate practice at the firm, which performs between 600 and 700 closings in a typical year. In 2020, the firm was so busy that attorneys had to stop taking new files three separate times during the year, and they ultimately conducted 911 closings, with Thayer sometimes running between cars in the firm’s parking lot to maintain social distancing between parties.

“I consider what I do happy law,” he says. “I enjoy helping people accomplish their goals.”

Thayer provides pro bono services for charities such as the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, Looking Upwards, the James Urban Foundation, the Guardian Duck Foundation and the Butler Basketball Club.

Outside of the office, he sits on the board of directors of the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce and serves as vice president. He is also the chair of Newport County Emerging Leaders, a founder of East Bay Young Professionals and a member of Rhode Island Young Professionals.

“I think of myself as a fireman. I deal with people all day, every day, and I put out fires.”

UP & COMING



JOSHUA D. XAVIER

Associate, Partridge, Snow & Hahn  
Roger Williams University School of Law

Joshua D. Xavier takes pride in keeping his clients compliant.

An employment attorney, his interest in the practice area grew from his passion for civil rights and a desire for all employees to enjoy a healthy, safe and discrimination-free workplace.

To achieve that, he spends the majority of his day fielding questions from employers on issues ranging from severance agreements to drug testing, and from wage and hour concerns to the Family and Medical Leave Act. He also helps draft employment handbooks that have “a long-lasting effect” on a workplace, he says. The rest of his time is spent focused on litigation.

“My practice is a healthy combination of advising, counseling, answering questions

and full-fledged litigation,” he says. “Employment has a major role in people’s lives, and, in many cases, we spend more time working than we do with our families and friends. I take pride in the fact that my efforts lead to lawful compliance and making sure that employers value their employees and do not unlawfully discriminate.”

Xavier is active in the community. He is a board member for the Rhode Island Center for Justice and the Montessori Community School of Rhode Island, and he was appointed in 2020 to the Merit Selection Panel for the U.S. District Court, tasked with reviewing the performances and office operations of U.S. Magistrate Judges Lincoln D. Almond and Patricia A. Sullivan.

He is a member of the Employment Law Alliance, Rhode Island Bar Association, Rhode Island Thurgood Marshall Law Society, Rhode Island Hispanic Bar Association, Rhode Island chapter of the Federal Bar Association, and Rhode Island Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He also serves as a volunteer attorney with Roger Williams University School of Law’s Pro Bono Collaborative and currently participates in the Special Immigrant Juvenile Project.

“I take pride in the fact that my efforts lead to lawful compliance and making sure that employers value their employees and do not unlawfully discriminate.”

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LEADERS IN THE LAW



ARMANDO E. BATASTINI

Partner, Nixon Peabody  
Roger Williams University School of Law

Though Armando E. Batastini began his legal career as a pure commercial litigator, over time his practice has evolved into “a hybrid model,” he says. The leader of the distressed commercial debt litigation team at Nixon Peabody, Batastini represents businesses and owners in a wide variety of contractual, shareholder and commercial realty disputes while spending a significant portion of his time as counsel for holders of commercial debt in all aspects of workouts, foreclosures, receiverships and guaranty enforcement actions. “I really enjoy the variety in my practice,” he says. “Each case is different and presents its own unique set of problems.”

Batastini entered the law after serving as an officer in the U.S. Navy. He continues his service to the community through his extensive pro bono efforts, for which he was recognized by the Rhode Island Bar Association in 2008 with its Pro Bono Publico Award. He coordinates Nixon Peabody’s representation in collaboration with Kids In Need of Defense, performs election law work for the Rhode Island chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, and is an active participant in the Rhode Island Bar Association’s Volunteer Lawyer Program, Elderly Pro Bono Program, and — “closest to my heart” — the Armed Services Legal Project. Last year, he contributed more than 100 pro bono hours to his clients, including the McAuley House and the Urban League of Rhode Island. A past president of RIBA, he is a fellow of the Rhode Island Bar Foundation and a member of its board of directors. He is also a member of the Justinian Law Society, sits on the board of the Boston/Providence Service Academy Business Network, and is a one-time contestant on “Jeopardy.”

“I really enjoy the variety in my practice. Each case is different and presents its own unique set of problems.”

LEADERS IN THE LAW



ROBERT V. CHISHOLM

Partner, Chisholm, Chisholm & Kilpatrick  
Boston University School of Law

A single case influenced the trajectory of Robert V. Chisholm’s legal career. In the early 1990s, he began representing his uncle, a military veteran, after his claim for disability benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs was wrongfully denied. It was Chisholm’s introduction to the newly created U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, and when the case was over other veterans began reaching out to him for help. “I started getting interested in what was happening to these veterans and became more and more involved in this area of law,” he says. “I love what I do and I love representing our clients, because we can make a difference in people’s lives,” Chisholm says. “Obtaining benefits can literally change

someone’s life by providing for stable housing and medical care. It is really rewarding when we are able to make a life-changing impact.” Chisholm has leveraged his expertise to educate other attorneys as the practice area has grown over the years. A founding member of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Bar Association (and former president of the organization), he is also a former president of NOVA, the National Organization of Veterans’ Advocates. As part of his leadership and work with NOVA, Chisholm helped to pass a significant amendment to 38 U.S.C. § 5904, which now permits veterans to hire an attorney after a Notice of Disagreement is filed. A member of the Rhode Island Bar Association, Rhode Island Association for Justice and military law section of the Federal Bar Association, Chisholm also provides pro bono representation to veterans and their dependents. Over the years, he has been recognized for his work, inducted into NOVA’s Hall of Honor and awarded the organization’s Kenneth Carpenter Achievement Award for Excellence. In 2016, he was the recipient of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Hart T. Mankin Distinguished Service Award.

“Obtaining benefits can literally change someone’s life by providing for stable housing and medical care.”

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LEADERS IN THE LAW



DANA M. HORTON

Partner, Robinson & Cole  
New England Law | Boston

From a young age, Dana M. Horton wanted to be a lawyer. “I have always felt very comfortable advocating for myself and for others,” she says. Today, she is an insurance litigation attorney at Robinson & Cole, where she focuses on advising and representing insurance companies in large property loss subrogation matters, property insurance coverage disputes and bad faith claims. She works on cases from inception to conclusion and on any given day could be in court, at a (virtual) hearing or working on discovery. While she enjoys the variety, she says that nothing beats a trial. “Trying cases is the best part of the job. After all the time and effort, you get to

make your argument to a judge or a jury, and win or lose you know you did your best. You can't ask for more than that.” In addition to her caseload, Horton is involved in firm leadership. Co-chair of Robinson & Cole's women's committee, she also sits on the wellness committee and the diversity, equity and inclusion committee. Horton mentors younger attorneys at the firm and oversees a program that encourages and helps to foster opportunities for newer attorneys to network and interact with more experienced members of the firm. An active member of the Rhode Island Bar Association, she sits on the Superior Court Bench Bar Committee (after serving as chair for five years), the Federal Court Bench Bar Committee, the Executive Committee and the House of Delegates. A member of the Rhode Island Women's Bar Association, she is a past president of the New London County Bar Association. Horton gives back through pro bono work, handling guardianships for adults residing within residential group homes. The chair of the Town of Westerly Board of Tax Assessment Appeals, she is also the president of the Springbrook Elementary School PTO and sits on the human rights committee for Perspectives Corporation.

“Trying cases is the best part of the job. After all the time and effort, you get to make your argument to a judge or a jury.”

LEADERS IN THE LAW



LORRAINE N. LALLI

Assistant Dean, Roger Williams University School of Law  
Roger Williams University School of Law

Lorraine N. Lalli decided to become a lawyer because she was looking for a career where she could make a difference in the community. After several years in private practice, she jumped at the chance to join Roger Williams University School of Law to help her alma mater and the legal profession as a whole improve their diversity efforts. A campus leader on diversity, Lalli is a member of the admissions committee and the diversity and inclusion steering committee at the law school, as well as a member of the university's council on inclusive excellence. “I really focus an equity lens on everything I do and try to identify where my work can be most impactful, to help move organizations and systems towards systemic

change,” she says. Lalli also supports diverse students in their academic, professional and personal goals, beginning as early as high school through the law school's Diversity Symposium. The annual event brings together diverse high school and college students with diverse judges, lawyers and elected leaders. “A majority of our students go to mid-size and small firms doing client-centered work and really want to use their law degree as a vehicle for change, whether that is personal change to improve family circumstances or change for clients, by advocating for justice,” she says. “Being able to support our students in their dreams and their vocations is really powerful and rewarding work.” Outside the office, Lalli has served on the Judicial Nominating Commission, the Providence School Board and is active in the Diversity and Inclusion Professionals organization. She volunteers on the United Way of Rhode Island's Community Investment Committee and serves on the boards of directors for the Mt. Hope Learning Center and One Neighborhood Builders. An avid runner, she has completed five marathons.

“Being able to support our students in their dreams and their vocations is really powerful and rewarding work.”

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Congratulations to our  
Partner and friend  
Ralph R. Liguori  
for being chosen by  
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as a 2021 Leader in the Law.

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LEADERS IN THE LAW



RALPH R. LIGUORI

Partner, Jones Kelleher  
New England Law | Boston

Ralph R. Liguori has devoted his career to the law, first as a police officer and for the last 27 years as an attorney. Growing up in a small Italian enclave in Providence after immigrating to the United States just shy of 10 years old, Liguori became a municipal police officer and “fell in love with the law and the notion of helping people.” He went to law school at night and established his own firm after graduation, practicing law by day and working nights as a police officer. After 20 years of doing both, he made the transition to practicing law full time.

“It was an absolutely crazy ride, but I have thoroughly enjoyed it,” he says. “My passion for the law and helping people has never changed; I just have a different role.” Liguori focuses his practice on personal injury litigation, with cases involving medical malpractice, premises liability and insurance subrogation. “I really enjoy moving the ball down the field for my clients every day,” he says. “Sometimes it is just a little bit, and other days it is a lot. But I like being able to look back at the end of the day knowing that I advanced my client’s case toward a resolution.” A past president of the Rhode Island Association of Justice and the Justinian Law Society, Liguori currently chairs the RIAJ’s COVID-19 Response Committee. He also sits on the board of the National Italian American Bar Association, and is a fellow with the Rhode Island Bar Association and a member of the Rhode Island Supreme Court Disciplinary Board. He’s a former member of the Rhode Island Parole Board. Liguori is a founding board member of the Joan DeCotis Foundation, which aims to raise awareness of lung cancer and support promising clinical trials.

“I like being able to look back at the end of the day knowing that I advanced my client’s case toward a resolution.”

HALL OF FAME



VICTORIA M. ALMEIDA

Senior Counsel, Adler, Pollock & Sheehan  
Suffolk University Law School

Over the course of her 45 years as a practicing attorney, Victoria M. Almeida has had several “firsts,” from working on cases of first impression to being the first woman in state history appointed executive counsel to a governor. “I am honored to be a part of the law, a glorious vocation that enables lawyers to enrich others with the application of law and justness to a myriad of life and business experiences,” she says. Co-chair of Adler, Pollock & Sheehan’s government relations practice group, Almeida has a vast and diversified civil and criminal practice. Her notable cases range from the successful defense of the former state Senate president on ethics charges to winning a challenge to a state law that required employers to provide health insurance to employees receiving workers’ compensation benefits.

She fondly recalls her stint as part of Gov. J. Joseph Garrahy’s cabinet, when she participated in several historic events in state history, from the blizzard of ‘78 to establishing the Department of Environmental Management. Her public service has continued over the years, both in official roles as well as pro bono work, “some of the most rewarding legal work I do,” she says. Vice chair for the Rhode Island Parole Board for 20 years, Almeida chairs the board of directors for Rhode Island Legal Services. She also chairs the Rhode Island Health Services Council and is a municipal court judge in Cumberland. A past president of the Rhode Island Bar Association, she is a member of RIBA’s House of Delegates and a lifetime fellow and vice president of the Rhode Island Bar Foundation. During her tenure as RIBA president, Almeida established the U.S. Armed Forces Legal Project to assist and provide legal services for active members and veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. RIBA was the first state bar to launch such a program. RIBA honored Almeida with the creation of the Victoria M. Almeida Servant Leader Award, the first time in the bar’s 113-year history that it has named an award in honor of a living member.

“I am honored to be a part of the law, a glorious vocation that enables lawyers to enrich others with the application of law and justness to a myriad of life and business experiences.”

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Principal, Law Offices of Vincent F. Ragosta Jr.  
Gonzaga University School of Law

Growing up, Vincent F. Ragosta Jr. would visit his father’s law office on weekend afternoons. While he didn’t quite understand what the lawyers were doing, “I knew it was something important and I was intrigued,” he recalls. “I never really thought about another career.”

While in law school Ragosta developed an interest in labor law that has remained steadfast over the last four decades.

“I was really taken by the intellectual side of labor law as well as the diversity of skill sets that labor lawyers use,” he says. “Collective bargaining requires you to be diplomatic and at times a forceful negotiator, and if bargaining fails, then dispute resolution can take the form of arbitration or litigation.”

Ragosta has played a role in some of the biggest labor disputes in Rhode Island, representing the City of Providence in winning an injunction against a wildcat strike by

firefighters, negotiating the state’s first municipal collective bargaining agreements, which eliminated longevity salary supplements for all employees, and winning a widely publicized Superior Court decision permitting the layoff of the Cranston crossing guards.

Although he primarily represents employers, including municipalities and government agencies, “being selected by union-side attorneys and business agents to serve as a mediator and arbitrator in labor impasses are among my most gratifying experiences as a management-side labor lawyer,” Ragosta says.

He also takes particular pride in his niche practice of prosecuting police misconduct cases, from the Providence Police Department’s promotional tests cheating scandal to incidents of police brutality to the so-called “ticketgate” scandals.

“I believe it serves an important public interest when an officer who has engaged in either dishonesty or brutality is removed from the force,” he says.

A member of the committee which developed the rules for court annexed arbitration for the Rhode Island Superior Court, he actively serves as a court-annexed arbitrator and a mediator for the Department of Labor and Training. Ragosta chairs the Town of East Greenwich Personnel Board and is a member of the American Arbitration Association’s National Labor/Management Council as well as the Rhode Island Bar Association’s Labor and Employment Committee.

“I was really taken by the intellectual side of labor law as well as the diversity of skill sets that labor lawyers use.”

HALL OF FAME



RONALD J. RESMINI

Managing Partner, Law Offices of Ronald J. Resmini  
Suffolk University Law School

Although Ronald J. Resmini took an indirect path to the law, he has spent more than five decades trying to right wrongs and correct injustices for his clients.

He concentrates his practice in the areas of personal injury, accident and tort law. His notable cases include litigation that established the only exception to the recreational use statute, the largest verdict in Bristol County District Court history, intrauterine device litigation and the Station Fire cases.

“When I take on a case, I believe in it,” he says. “I can only argue a case that I truly believe in.”

Now proudly joined by all three of his sons at his law firm — Resmini recalls that within six months of their births he had their names placed on the door of the office — he has one career goal left: to try a case at the age of 90.

“I would love to live long enough to do it and do it well,” he says. “Someone could help me stand up and sit down, but as long as I can talk, I would do it. If I could choose my time of death, it would be at the end of my closing argument.”

The author of “Rhode Island Tort Law & Personal Injury Practice,” “Rhode Island Civil Practice and Procedure,” and “Rhode Island Actions & Remedies” (each a two-volume series), Resmini was an originator and former chairman of IOLTA as well as an originator of court-annexed arbitration.

He co-founded the Rhode Island Trial Lawyers Association in 1974 and was selected to the National Academy of Personal Injury Attorneys, as well as a board examiner of the National Board of Trial Advocacy.

A former board member of the Providence Chapter of the American Red Cross, Resmini frequently contributes to the community.

“If I could choose my time of death, it would be at the end of my closing argument.”

Congratulations to  
Ronald J. Resmini  
on his well deserved  
Hall of Fame Award!



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HALL OF FAME



RICHARD A. SINAPI

Managing Attorney, Sinapi Law Associates  
Harvard Law School

For decades, Richard A. Sinapi has been involved in high-stakes civil rights and employment law cases, as well as a force behind new legislation. While he has a general law practice, Sinapi has a significant concentration in employment law, working on everything from workers’ compensation to discrimination to wage and hour cases. He also takes a particular interest in First Amendment and Fourth Amendment issues, often working as a cooperating attorney with the ACLU of Rhode Island. On the legislative front, Sinapi has helped revise agency regulations as well as co-drafted and lobbied for the enactment of numerous pieces of legislation. One highlight is a revision to the state’s wage act which included the creation of a private right of action for state wage and hour violations and the misclassification of employees as

independent contractors. “For me, the practice of law has always been and will continue to be a noble calling, with justice over profits and gain,” Sinapi says. While that can sometimes result in tough decisions about what cases to take, he takes pride in the success and longevity of his firm over the last 34 years. “I’ve been able to grow this firm and mentor a lot of attorneys while taking on meaningful cases that protect and further civil rights and help out the average person,” he says. Sinapi recently ended his term as the president of the Rhode Island Association for Justice. A member of the Justinian Law Society of Rhode Island, the National Employment Lawyers Association, the National Police Accountability Project and the American Trial Lawyers Association, he is active in the Rhode Island Bar Association as a member of the Superior Court Bench Bar Committee, Workers’ Comp Bench Bar Committee and Labor and Employment Law Committee, as well as the House of Delegates. In 2010, the ACLU of Rhode Island presented him with the William G. McLoughlin First Amendment Award in recognition of his more than 20 years of work fighting for free speech.

“For me, the practice of law has always been and will continue to be a noble calling, with justice over profits and gain.”

HALL OF FAME



STEVEN E. SNOW

Senior Counsel, Partridge, Snow & Hahn  
American University Washington College of Law

Steven E. Snow’s 45-year legal career has made a lasting impact on the law, both in Rhode Island and beyond. He successfully argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Salve Regina College v. Russell*, a 1991 decision that established the standard of federal appellate review of District Court decisions on state law. He also handled a high-profile challenge to Vincent A. Cianci Jr.’s attempt to run in a special Providence mayoral election, after Cianci was forced to step down from the position because he had been convicted of felony assault. Though the State Board of Elections rejected the challenge and certified Cianci as a candidate, the R.I. Supreme Court issued a stay of the election before ruling that Cianci was ineligible to run. Most recently, Snow represented the plaintiff in a dispute between the Touro Synagogue in Newport (the second oldest Jewish congregation, with the oldest

synagogue building in the United States) and a midtown Manhattan congregation (the oldest Jewish congregation in the country) over ownership of a set of colonial-era finial bells crafted by a famous silversmith and the synagogue itself. The three-year litigation resulted in a nine-day bench trial that generated a 1,850-page transcript and almost 900 admitted exhibits, some of which dated back to the 17th century. With well over 100 reported federal and state court decisions to his credit, Snow tried an average of six to eight cases per year, although the number of trials has dropped in recent years. “My favorite part of the job is trying cases, particularly jury trials,” he says. “It is a real challenge to be able to persuade a jury.” A founding partner of Partridge, Snow & Hahn, Snow takes pride in the firm’s strong presence in the legal community for more than 30 years and makes it a point to mentor younger litigators at the firm. Snow taught antitrust and employment law at Roger Williams University School of Law and legal aspects of health care in the MBA program at Bryant University. Snow is also a licensed commercial pilot who has flown across the Atlantic Ocean four times and an avid sailor. He currently sits on the board of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra and Music School.

“My favorite part of the job is trying cases, particularly jury trials.”

Sinapi Law is proud to congratulate  
our Friend, Leader, and  
Managing Principal attorney,  
**Richard A. Sinapi**

for his selection as a 2021 “Hall of Fame”  
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We also congratulate all of the 2021  
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contributions to our profession and communities.

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Congratulations!

The lawyers and staff of Partridge Snow & Hahn are proud to see Steven E. Snow recognized as a Hall of Fame honoree and Joshua D. Xavier recognized as an Up & Coming Lawyer by Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly.

The firm has been blessed to have Steve since its founding. His legal career has been exceptional in every way. The firm is equally blessed to have smart, engaged lawyers like Josh, who has already established himself as an excellent lawyer and community member.

Congratulations to all those being recognized by Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly.

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PRO BONO



NEVILLE J. BEDFORD

Principal, Law Office of Neville Bedford  
Roger Williams University School of Law

For Neville J. Bedford, the importance of community involvement and service to others was instilled at an early age. Growing up in a home that welcomed 19 foster children over the course of 17 years, he learned “that all people are important regardless of their origin, race, color or creed.” After law school, Bedford spent a few years at other firms before hanging out his shingle in 2005. His practice includes family law, business disputes, personal injury law, criminal law, intellectual property, and for-profit and nonprofit consultation. “I am overwhelmed when I encounter former clients years after representing them and they stop by to let me know that they listened to my advice, followed it, and experienced positive changes,” he says. Bedford dedicates a significant portion of his time to pro bono efforts, from

“I am overwhelmed when I encounter former clients [who] stop by to let me know that they listened to my advice, followed it, and experienced positive changes.”

a monthly clinic at Mathewson St. Church (now conducted via telephone due to COVID-19 restrictions) to efforts with the Pro Bono Collaborative at Rogers Williams University School of Law. He also supports fellow lawyers who provide pro bono services through the Rhode Island Bar Association, guiding and advising those with little experience in the Family Court. In addition, he works with the Public Service Involvement Committee and the Lawyers Helping Lawyers Bench Bar Committee, focusing on incorporating mindfulness practices. “I feel bad for practitioners who have not experienced the joy of serving selflessly, intentionally,” he says. Bedford’s service also includes work on various community boards. A former member of the board of directors of Sojourner House and RIDEP, he currently chairs the board of Providence Community Radio, co-chairs the board of Project Weber/Renew, and sits on the Salvation Army’s advisory board. He is an adjunct professor at his alma mater and a member of RIBA’s House of Delegates, Volunteer Lawyer Program, and Family Court Bench Bar Committee.

JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE



HON. PAUL A. SUTTELL

Chief Justice, Rhode Island Supreme Court  
Suffolk University Law School

When it came time to choose a career, Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell of the Rhode Island Supreme Court took the path of public service. After a few years of general private practice and work as legal counsel to the minority leader in the state House of Representatives, Suttell was elected to the House in 1982. For eight years, he represented a district that encompassed Little Compton as well as portions of Tiverton and Portsmouth, working on several committees and acting as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in New Orleans in 1988. Recognizing that “sometimes political life is not conducive to family life,” Suttell applied for a judicial post and was appointed by Gov. Edward D. DiPrete as an associate justice of the Family Court in 1990. Thirteen years later, Suttell was tapped

by Gov. Donald L. Carcieri to be associate justice on the Rhode Island Supreme Court. Carcieri appointed him as chief justice in 2009. “Family Court can be a very sad place to be, hearing child abuse and neglect cases, but I do miss the interactions with the litigants and the attorneys,” he says. “But on the Supreme Court, we have the opportunity to shape the law and interpret the statutes that have been enacted by the General Assembly, and I really enjoy the intellectually challenging aspects of the job.” While the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges to the justice system, “I’m really proud of how well the courts have done in adapting to the new technologies and remote hearings,” he says. Outside the courtroom, Suttell continues his public service as the director of the Little Compton Historical Society. A former moderator and former chairman of the trustees of the Little Compton United Congregational Church, he is also the past president of both the Little Compton Historical Society and the Sakonnet Preservation Association. President-elect of the Conference of Chief Justices, Suttell will also chair the National Center for State Courts when he assumes the position next year.

“I’m really proud of how well the courts have done in adapting to the new technologies and remote hearings.”

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LAWYERS OF THE YEAR



SARAH T. “SALLY” DOWLING

Chair, Judicial Nominating Commission  
Northeastern University School of Law

As Sarah T. “Sally” Dowling neared retirement in 2015, former Gov. Gina M. Raimondo picked up the phone and asked her to chair the state’s Judicial Nominating Commission.  
“You really can’t say no to the governor when she calls and asks you to do something,” Dowling says. “I was representing the Rhode Island State Investment Commission as a lawyer when she was the state treasurer, so I knew her pretty well and I was flattered that she would ask me to serve in that capacity.”

Dowling’s long legal career and countless civic activities likely placed her in good stead to play a role in the selection process for the state’s judges.

A native Clevelander, she arrived in Rhode Island in 1962 by way of Wellesley College, where she met her future spouse in a set-up orchestrated by his sister, who happened to be her roommate.

In the ensuing years, she raised four children, began commuting to law school in Boston once her youngest entered kindergarten, and joined Rhode Island’s growing ranks of female attorneys in the 1970s. Dowling would spend much of the next four decades practicing law at Adler, Pollock & Sheehan.

Since being appointed to the JNC, she has spearheaded the vetting process as

part of two dozen judicial nominations. After a quiet 2019, the past year has been a particularly busy one for the commission, which recommended candidates for the governor’s consideration in filling Superior and Family court vacancies. The nine-member panel also had occasion to solicit and interview candidates for two Supreme Court seats, the first to become available in a decade with the retirements of Justices Gilbert V. Indeglia and Francis X. Flaherty.

That process culminated in the December confirmation of two female Supreme Court justices, Erin Lynch Prata and Melissa A. Long. Long is also the first person of color to be named to the state’s highest court.

“The big theme since I’ve been on the commission has been increasing diversity in the judiciary. But diversity is very complicated, and you have to really think about it and keep working at it,” Dowling says. “Everyone self-nominates, so the first step is to get those applications in. In that vein, we’ve reached out to all kinds of people in minority communities. We’ve broadened the base of our advertising on Hispanic radio, for example. It’s critical to, number one, get the word out that there is an opening, and number two, make sure diverse candidates know that they have a chance.”

“The big theme since I’ve been on the commission has been increasing diversity in the judiciary. But diversity is very complicated, and you have to really think about it and keep working at it.”

LAWYERS OF THE YEAR



DEBORAH S. GONZALEZ

Professor, Roger Williams University School of Law  
Roger Williams University School of Law

While last year likely presented challenges in the daily lives of just about everyone, immigration lawyer and Roger Williams University School of Law Professor Deborah S. Gonzalez spent considerable energy in 2020 working on behalf of many whose congregate setting has prevented them from seeking safe haven: immigrant detainees at the Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls.

Last May, Gonzalez and a team of similarly committed public interest attorneys filed a putative class action habeas petition in federal court, claiming the conditions in which the Wyatt ICE detainees were being confined violated their Fifth Amendment due process rights.

Those conditions, according to Gonzalez, include inescapably close social proximity, inadequate cleaning protocols, limited supplies of PPE, and guards who don’t always take appropriate precautions.

U.S. District Court Judge Mary S. McElroy found the petition to present a “substantial claim of constitutional error” and granted class certification. In early June, at a time when Wyatt housed 58 ICE detainees, she ordered that each class member be afforded an individual bail hearing.

Gonzalez and her colleagues thus embarked on representing dozens in those hearings, a process that continues today with new detentions.

“The litigation is solely so that civil detainees’ due process rights aren’t being violated by being subjected to a substantial risk of harm to their health from the COVID virus at Wyatt,” Gonzalez says. “It has been a completely new experience for me, because I don’t have that much experience in federal court. Going into it, we didn’t know a lot about Judge McElroy, because she was fairly new to the bench. Although we haven’t won every bail petition, what we have gotten is a thoughtful consideration of each case, and that’s all I can ask for.”

“The litigation is solely so that civil detainees’ due process rights aren’t being violated by being subjected to a substantial risk of harm to their health from the COVID virus at Wyatt.”

LAWYERS OF THE YEAR



THOMAS W. LYONS III

Partner, Strauss, Factor, Laing & Lyons  
Case Western Reserve University Law School

Back in March 2020, Providence attorney Thomas W. Lyons III was disappointed when a three-judge panel of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the “community caretaking exception” to the Fourth Amendment can justify warrantless entry into homes.

As a cooperating attorney with Rhode Island’s ACLU, Lyons had argued before the court that his client, Edward Caniglia, was subjected to an unconstitutional seizure when Cranston police entered his home without a court order and took his firearms out of a concern for his mental health. Lyons characterized that action as contrary to the privacy protections that the Fourth Amendment affords people in their homes.

The panel felt otherwise, finding the circumstances fell within the officers’ community caretaking function. The 1st Circuit thus joined with other courts in extending the doctrine beyond the motor vehicle context.

But several months later, Lyons received good news for his client: the U.S. Supreme Court had granted his petition for a writ of certiorari in the case.

“I had begun to consider a cert petition when I read the panel’s opinion, which acknowledged a very sharp division among the circuit courts and state supreme

courts on whether the community caretaking function permits police to engage in searches and seizures of a home absent a court order,” Lyons says.

Oral arguments took place at the end of March.

Also in 2020, Lyons joined with the ACLU in successfully defending a plaintiff’s First Amendment rights in *Carroll v. Craddock*. There, a federal judge granted a preliminary injunction preventing the Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles from recalling an electric car owner’s “FKGAS” vanity license plate, finding the plaintiff had put forth a strong claim that the agency’s “good taste and decency” standard was not being applied in a viewpoint-neutral manner and was also unconstitutionally vague.

Lyons, whose practice at Strauss, Factor, Laing & Lyons centers on products liability defense and commercial litigation, shares the credit for his ability to also dedicate time advocating for civil liberties.

“I give a shoutout to my associate, Rhiannon Huffman, who worked with me on both *Caniglia* and *Carroll*,” he says. “And certainly the fact that I can do these cases is because other lawyers in the firm, including my wife [Lynda Laing] and Meghan Barry, are busy doing the ‘workaday stuff’ of making money.”

“The panel’s opinion acknowledged a very sharp division among the [courts] on whether the community caretaking function permits police to engage in searches and seizures of a home absent a court order.”



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Sarah T. "Sally" Dowling

*First Women of the Rhode Island Bar honoree, 1976*

Deborah S. Gonzalez, Esq. '04, L'07, P'18

*Director of the Immigration Law Clinic, RWU Law*

*Bruce I. Kogan Distinguished Service Professor of Law, RWU Law*

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Lorraine N. Lalli '01, Assistant Dean of Students, RWU Law

Robert V. Chisholm, Chisholm, Chisholm & Kilpatrick

*Co-Director, Veterans Disability Appeals Field Clinic, RWU Law*

Armando E. Batastini III '98, Nixon Peabody

### **PRO BONO HONOREE**

Neville J. Bedford '00, '13, Law Office of Neville Bedford

### **HALL OF FAME**

Victoria M. Almeida, Adler, Pollock & Sheehan

*First Women of the Rhode Island Bar honoree, 1976*

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John D. Meara '11, Mandell, Boisclair & Mandell

Kathryn M. Rattigan '12, Robinson & Cole

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Joshua D. Xavier '14, Partridge, Snow & Hahn

### **JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE**

Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell, Rhode Island Supreme Court

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