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PRO BONO ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR

RICHARD WHITELEY, BRACEWELL



Texas Lawyer is recognizing Richard Whiteley of Bracewell as Pro Bono Attorney of the Year. Read a Q&A with him below.

What challenges do you face when working on pro bono cases, and how do you overcome them to achieve the best outcomes for your clients?

Pro bono clients are often navigating the most difficult moments of their lives: enduring mistreatment while incarcerated, trying to rebuild with a criminal record, seeking safety through asylum, or fighting for benefits they earned in uniform. The complexity is real. The emotional weight is real. To meet it, I invest the same preparation and advocacy I would bring to any client.

I also make it a priority to build trust, like spending extra time to explain the process and empowering clients to participate in their own defense. Collaboration is key. Our teams leverage expertise across the firm, and we partner with organizations like Houston Volunteer Lawyers to marshal resources. Ultimately, persistence, empathy and a willingness to fight hard for every client are the keys to achieving the best possible results.

How does your firm encourage pro bono work?

Bracewell fosters a strong pro bono culture by making service an institutional priority and providing concrete support for attorneys who want to give back. We've formalized our commitment through partnerships, like with Houston Volunteer Lawyers, where we pledge to take at least one pro bono case for every five lawyers in our Houston office each year. We have exceeded that goal every year for seven straight years.

The firm recognizes pro bono efforts in evaluations and awards, and our leadership celebrates successes across the firm, like our recent Large Firm Pro Bono Award from the Houston Bar Association. We also recognize all associates who exceed 50 hours of pro bono work per year, and reward associates who demonstrate exceptional dedication to pro bono matters through the Bracewell Pro Bono Champions program.

We offer mentorship for new attorneys who want to get involved, organize joint clinics with clients such as Cheniere to reach underserved populations and provide resources so attorneys can devote the time and attention these cases deserve.

Finally, associates receive up to 100 hours of credit toward their billable hours budget for their work on pro bono cases.

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