

Fredrikson & Byron's Pro Bono Team Honored with Global Citizenship Award Grand Prize

Firm News

10.06.2015

Fredrikson & Byron received the Global Citizenship Award Grand Prize for 2015—the highest award for pro bono matters given by *The American Lawyer*. Fredrikson & Byron's pro bono involvement with the *Signal International Litigation*, first filed in 2008 by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), was honored with 11 other law firms when *The American Lawyer* selected the case as its Global Citizenship Award Grand Prize. The *Signal International Litigation* team had previously received *The American Lawyer's* Global Pro Bono Dispute of the Year for 2015, making it eligible for the Global Citizenship Grand Prize. The Global Citizenship Award Grand Prize was received at the Global Legal Awards ceremony held on September 28, at the Gotham Hall in New York City.

The *Signal International Litigation* involves a number of lawsuits representing more than 200 Indian guest workers, who are alleged to have been defrauded and exploited in a labor trafficking scheme engaged in by Signal International, a Gulf Coast marine services company, an immigration lawyer and an Indian labor recruiter that lured hundreds of workers to Mississippi and Texas shipyards with false promises of permanent U.S. residency. The SPLC coordinated an unprecedented legal collaboration that brought together a dozen of the nation's top law firms and civil rights organizations to represent, on a pro bono basis, hundreds of workers excluded from the original SPLC suit by the denial of class action status.

For the past two years, Fredrikson represented 10 Indian guest workers in a case filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas. Fredrikson's complaint asserts claims for violation of the federal anti-trafficking statute, fraud, discrimination and breach of contract. The firm litigated the case through discovery, motions practice, and almost to trial, which was scheduled for August 2015. Trial was postponed and the claims against Signal settled when the company filed for bankruptcy in July and agreed to set up a \$20 million fund as part of the bankruptcy to resolve the trafficking claims and issue an apology to the trafficking victims.

Fredrikson's representation has been headed up by Minneapolis-based litigation shareholders Sten-Erik Hoidal, Lousene M. Hoppe and Timothy M. O'Shea. Fredrikson's team also includes, Andrew F. Johnson, Haley Waller Pitts, Benjamin R. Tozer, Chelsea Brennan DesAutels, Johanna M. Franzen, David D. Coyle, Steven R. Kinsella, James E. Dorsey, Joann M. Landkamer, Clinton E. Cutler, Krithiga

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Ganesan and Maureen E. Young.

Fellow law firms honored by *The American Lawyer* for their involvement in the litigation include Crowell & Moring; Skadden Arps; Covington & Burling; DLA Piper; Kaye Scholer; Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton; Latham & Watkins; Manatt, Phelps & Phillips; McDermott Will & Emery; Sahn Ward Coschignano & Baker; Sutherland Asbill & Brennan.

Fredrikson & Byron is a 275-attorney law firm based in Minneapolis, with offices in Bismarck, Des Moines, Fargo, St. Paul, Monterrey, Mexico, and Shanghai, China. Fredrikson & Byron has a reputation as the firm “where law and business meet”. Our attorneys bring business acumen and entrepreneurial thinking to work with clients, and operate as business advisors and strategic partners, as well as legal counselors. More information about the firm is available at www.fredlaw.com. Follow us on LinkedIn and on Twitter @FredriksonLaw.

Media Contact: Kelly Griffith, Marketing Communications Manager,
612.492.7514, kgriffith@fredlaw.com