

Dan Supalla and Team Honored for Pro Bono Work

May 2, 2019

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. – Each year, Briggs and Morgan gives an award recognizing outstanding pro bono service rendered in the previous year. This year’s award goes to Briggs shareholder Dan Supalla and his team of attorneys Emily Collins, Kirsten Pagel, and Joey Balthazor, who represented three Somali men who sought to reopen their immigration cases to seek asylum and other relief in the U.S.

The men were three of the “Somali 92” – a group of 92 Somali-born men and women, most of whom had fled the Somali civil war in the 1990s – who were to be removed on a December 7, 2017 flight. The December 7 flight made it to Dakar, Senegal, where it remained on the tarmac for more than 24 hours before being turned back to the U.S. While on the flight, the passengers were shackled, denied restroom access and medication, verbally abused and threatened, and struck.

When the flight returned to Miami, a partnership of the University of Miami School of Law, Americans for Immigrant Justice, U of Minnesota Law School, Legal Aid, and The Advocates for Human Rights filed a class action on behalf of the Somali 92. As a result of the lawsuit, the passengers won the right to petition to have their immigration cases re-opened.

Supalla and Collins prepared motions to reopen for our three clients. The Immigration Court and Board of Immigration Appeals granted all three motions to reopen and set the cases for individual hearings. The Briggs team tried these cases in November 2018 and February 2019. At one individual hearing, after hearing the client’s testimony, the immigration judge granted the client’s petition to remain in the U.S. and care for his family. Two other cases remain on appeal to the BIA. Regardless of the outcome, it is critical that each client had his day in court, with counsel, to have their claims heard and decided.

In connection with the Pro Bono Award, Briggs gives \$1,000 to a charity of the winning attorney’s choice. Supalla has asked the award be given to The Advocates for Human Rights, through which Briggs was referred these cases.

About Briggs and Morgan

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Media Contact

Sarah Delaney
Senior Marketing Manager
Briggs and Morgan, P.A.
612.977.8724
sdelaney@briggs.com

Attorneys

O. Joseph Balthazor Jr.
Emily Collins
Kirsten Pagel
Daniel Supalla

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