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# SUPPORTING THOUSANDS IN THE CLEMENCY PROJECT 2014

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Approximately 75 Perkins Coie attorneys and paralegals in offices across the United States participated in the Clemency Project 2014, an unprecedented, independent effort by the nation's criminal defense bar that was formed in response to a request for assistance in identifying potentially eligible prisoners and preparing clemency petitions on their behalf.

**THROUGH THIS PROJECT,** law firms across the country are seeking sentence commutations from President Barack Obama for thousands of deserving, nonviolent federal prisoners who, if sentenced today under current sentencing laws and policies, would likely have received substantially lower sentences. There are nearly 100,000 individuals incarcerated for drug offenses and over 75,000 prisoners serving a mandatory minimum sentence.

Under this clemency initiative launched in January 2014, prisoners meeting specific criteria (including, for example, a nonviolent criminal history and good behavior in prison) are eligible to have their sentence reduced through the president's exercise of executive clemency. Perkins Coie has played a unique role as counsel to the project, conducting preliminary screening of over 3,000 applications in 2015. We are now working with the project to directly prepare clemency petitions for individual clients.



"Our screening work is the first step toward the administration granting clemency to nonviolent offenders who have served at least ten years on their sentence," said Washington, D.C. attorney Selena Linde, who heads our D.C. office's efforts on the project. "This will help rectify obsolete mandatory minimum sentences that required thousands of inmates (mainly diverse) to serve sentences disproportionate to their crimes."

The firm's overall efforts on the project have been led by Phoenix attorney J Cabou, who is on the board of directors of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and brought this project to the firm, along with Seattle attorney and former Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington Tom Hillier (see pages 12 –13).

In addition to the expertise offered by J and Tom, this large-scale firm effort has also included major contributions from Pro Bono Counsel Leah Medway and Pro Bono Manager April Campbell; attorney point persons in various offices, including Adrienne Baranowicz (New York), Bo Dul (Phoenix), Gina LaMonica (Chicago), Selena Linde (Washington, D.C.), Steven Schindler (Seattle), Laura Wolff (Washington, D.C.); and lead paralegals Valentina Barei (Seattle), Melinda Manchester (Phoenix) and Eric Sisson (Phoenix). The effort has also received regular back-up assistance from Pro Bono Administrative Assistant Krista Herman (HQ) and legal secretary Lisa Mazza (Phoenix). This project is the recipient of the firm's 2015 Pro Bono Leadership Award presented to a project or team (see page 30). ■