

PRO BONO HOT LIST | A SPECIAL REPORT

In the past year, lawyers fought for the disabled, voting rights and women's health. They volunteered their services for those who bravely serve our country—helping some secure citizenship and others maintain their right to religious freedom. They helped connect the community and law enforcement in Chicago and San Francisco, advocated for Texas foster children and worked to improve health care in South Dakota. These are their stories. —Lisa Helem

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON

Advancing Police Reforms in San Francisco

A 2015 TEXTING SCANDAL, IN WHICH at least 14 members of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) were found to have sent racist and homophobic messages, became the catalyst for substantial changes in the way police enforce the law in San Francisco.

First, San Francisco District Attorney George Gascón convened a Blue Ribbon Panel on Transparency, Accountability and Fairness in Law Enforcement.

The panel was composed of retired state and federal judges including LaDoris Cordell, who was a California Superior Court judge; Cruz Reynoso, a former justice on the California Supreme Court; and Dickran Tevzian, a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

Munger, Tolles & Olson attorney Jerry Roth served as the panel's pro bono general counsel, directing all legal aspects of the investigation.

The turning point in the year-long investigation, Roth said, was the panel's recognition of the difficulties investigating institutionalized bias in the SFPD would entail when the Police Officers' Association (POA) posted a bulletin "rejecting the premise" of the investigation and discouraging any police officer from participating without a POA representative involved.

"We realized then we were going to have to be dogged in pursuing the issues and would have to rely on the courage of police officers, community members and others willing to speak to us honestly about the issues raised by

the racist, discriminatory text messages," Roth explained.

In its July 2016, report, the panel found that: the SFPD was in need of more transparency, that it lacked robust oversight, that it needed to pay more attention to the potential for bias against people of color and that it needed to rebuild trust in communities it served.

The police commission passed a new body camera policy in June 2016 with input from the working groups on the panel. About 80 percent of SFPD officers are equipped with cameras as of February, Roth said.

In November, 2016, San Francisco adopted Prop. G, which renamed the Office of Citizen Complaints as the Department of Police Accountability (DPA). At least every two years, the DPA must review the SFPD's use-of-force policies and its handling of claims of police misconduct. The DPA director also has the discretion to audit or review any SFPD practice.

Munger Tolles also secured a permanent injunction on Sept. 29, 2016, from the Nevada Supreme Court in favor of parents with children in Nevada's public schools challenging Senate Bill 302, which offered tax-funded vouchers to pay for private, parochial or home schooling.

JERRY ROTH



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