

Akin Gump Associate Named New Pro Bono Counsel

By **Steven Trader**

Law360, New York (August 15, 2017, 3:13 PM EDT) -- Akin Gump has found its new pro bono counsel, announcing recently that an associate at the firm with a history of work with nonprofits and programs aimed at providing service to immigrants fleeing violent situations would be taking over the position.

Lauren Connell, previously an associate in the firm's corporate practice, will succeed Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP's first pro bono counsel Fiona Brett and step into a role that will have her assisting in the management of the firmwide pro bono practice, both maintaining relationships with the organizations Akin Gump has previously partnered with, and looking in a variety of fields for new pro bono opportunities for the firm's attorneys.



Lauren Connell

Connell, who will be based in New York, said she would also continue working with a pro bono program she coordinated starting in 2014 that helped serve women and children detained in Texas after fleeing violence in Central America.

"Basically I joined Akin Gump in part because of their robust pro bono practice, but I hadn't necessarily planned on doing pro bono work full time," Connell told Law360. "This was just an amazing opportunity that came to me and I'm excited to be able to take advantage of it and be a part of Akin Gump's pro bono practice in a different way now full time."

Connell started working with the firm as a pro bono scholar in the summer of 2012, while still studying law at the University of Pennsylvania. As part of the program, Akin Gump sponsored her work with HerJustice, a New York-based legal services organization. She then returned the next year as a summer associate.

After graduating in 2014, Connell joined the firm full time as an associate in its corporate practice, and quickly began coordinating the Karnes City Immigrant Family Pro Bono Project in Karnes, Texas, in which she met with detainees who'd fled violence Central America, and helped the women and children released on bond find temporary shelter with volunteer families in the San Antonio area.

She was named Akin Gump's pro bono associate of the year in 2016 for her work on the project.

“Lauren’s leadership of the Karnes City Immigrant Family Pro Bono Project demonstrated that she has the skill, commitment and compassion required to help manage and lead a pro bono practice, Akin Gump’s pro bono partner Steven Schulman said in a statement. “Her experience with corporate transactions will also allow us to continue to develop pro bono opportunities for transactional lawyers. I am very happy to welcome her to full-time pro bono practice.”

Besides continuing the work she started with Karnes, Connell said she’ll also keep working on other asylum matters she’s previously undertaken, for instance representing an Afghan interpreter fleeing the Taliban.

--Editing by Orlando Lorenzo.

All Content © 2003-2017, Portfolio Media, Inc.