

AILA Pro Bono High Five

AILA Doc. No. 18112871 | Dated November 4, 2019



[AILA's National Pro Bono Committee](#) interviews Chapter Pro Bono Champions, asking them five questions to learn more about how they began doing pro bono work and the impact of their work.

Beth Boyer, Connecticut Chapter



Beth Boyer has been licensed to practice law since 1994. Ms. Boyer worked as an attorney part-time for several years before taking a hiatus from practicing law to raise her children and participate in a variety of civic boards and engagements. During this time, Ms. Boyer helped several friends with immigration-related issues, allowing her to gain exposure to this area of the law. After her youngest son went to college, Ms. Boyer returned to actively practicing as an attorney. She initially worked at a firm handling family-based immigration matters and is now an Associate at Jackson Lewis P.C. in White Plains, NY. She is currently a member of the firm's Immigration practice group.

1. How did you get started with pro bono work?

When I began practicing immigration law, I was very pleased to learn that AILA operates a pro bono program specifically to help military members with immigration matters. My husband retired as a Captain after 30 years in the U.S. Navy and my youngest son is a Midshipman in Georgia Tech's Navy ROTC. He will be commissioned as an officer in May.

AILA made it easy to get involved. I signed up for the MAP listserv and when a case was posted that I thought I could help with, I took it. Then I took another. I've kept one or two active cases since then. The coordinators and other members of the MAP are an amazing resource and have been extremely helpful working through some difficult issues.

2. Why do you do pro bono? What do you personally get out of doing pro bono work?

When a client tells me “we could never have done this without you,” I feel so grateful to have been able to help. I’ve been handling mostly marriage-based immigration issues for military members. This generally means that a U.S. servicemember was deployed overseas, where he or she met and fell in love with someone. As we know, the immigration process is complicated, so helping military members through this process means lifting one of the many burdens they are dealing with when they are deployed or changing duty station to return home.

3. What has been your most rewarding experience and your most challenging experience doing this work?

Representing military clients is especially rewarding, but it also has its challenges. Military clients move often, they can be hard to reach, they have limited time to handle administrative matters, and may not have access to copiers and scanners. Most rewarding for me has been helping the daughter of a U.S. servicemember be acknowledged as having acquired citizenship from her servicemember parent, after a long process involving a deep dive into citizenship rules. I’ve never been so happy to get a call as I did when she told me she had received her U.S. passport!

4. What is a pro bono project you are currently working on that you are most passionate about?

My cases right now typically involve adjustment of status cases after getting through the fiancée visa process. These cases are not simple matters for servicemembers and their spouses. This is among the most important things going on in their lives and I keep that in mind as I work with them.

5. Do you have advice for other attorneys interested in taking on pro bono matters?

Taking a MAP case is a great way for an attorney who does not have a personal connection to the military to learn a bit about the armed forces. I encourage everyone in AILA to take one case from the MAP list or work together with a colleague to help a military family. Ask the servicemember about their background and why they joined the armed forces, about their boot camp experience, where have they been deployed, what their position is, and where they have most enjoyed traveling. Servicemembers endure long separations from their loved ones and they are often in harm’s way. Help make their service a bit easier by smoothing the way for a military naturalization, a parole in place, an adjustment of status, or helping a servicemember who, because of PTS, has had legal issues that have caused complications for an immigration matter. Attorneys advise and counsel every day. Why not utilize these skills to make a meaningful impact that can change a servicemember’s life for the better? What a truly meaningful way to support our troops!