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LAWYERS
WHO LEAD
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2015 AWARDS

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JEREMY CREELAN

JENNER & BLOCK

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FOR JENNER & BLOCK PARTNER Jeremy Creelan, pro bono work is not a feel-good hobby but a calling—and a tool with which people can change the world.

“I went to law school to try to contribute in some way to improve the world, either through public service, pro bono work, or a combination of the two,” the Yale Law School graduate said. “To my mind, it is one of the key responsibilities we bear as attorneys, to use whatever talents we have to improve on the state of the laws, the systems of government we live under, and the outcomes for those who need a lawyer but cannot afford one.”

Creelan’s legal career has been an example of achieving balance between public interest work, government service and private practice.

In 2006 he joined Jenner & Block, where he serves in the firm’s litigation department and as a member of the complex commercial litigation and government controversies and public policy litigation practices. He previously served as deputy director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law. At the Brennan Center, Creelan prosecuted a series of high-profile election law cases aimed at protecting voters’ rights.

This was not his first brush with politics. In April 2014, Gov. Andrew Cuomo asked Creelan to co-chair the Commission on Youth, Public Safety & Justice



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to develop a plan to reform the state’s juvenile justice systems.

As part of his 800 hours of pro bono work last year, Creelan concentrated on four major areas: researching and analyzing the state juvenile justice laws; managing the opposing views of law enforcement, judges, probation, reform advocates and others; drafting and editing the proposals with his staff; and educating members of the bar and others about the need for such reforms. When asked about the public service work that stands out for him, this project is at the top of his list.

“Through a lot of intense discussion from many different viewpoints, we developed a comprehensive blueprint to reform the state’s juvenile justice laws that

will, when it is enacted, not only help a lot of kids get their lives on track but also improve the safety of our communities,” he said.

Creelan said he and his committee still have work to do on youth justice reform: “The challenge is getting the plan through the Legislature in one piece, which will require a lot of work next session.”

His team from Jenner & Block also scored wins on behalf of Vietnam veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Acting as co-counsel with Yale’s Legal Services Organization Veterans Clinic, the firm challenged the U.S. Armed Forces’ less-than-honorable discharges of servicemembers who were never diagnosed with the stress-

related disorder. The plaintiffs’ military status was upgraded and the Secretary of Defense issued a guidance memorandum to the administrative boards that consider discharge upgrade applications, thanks to the work of Creelan and his team.

Creelan, 46, also worked on a solution to solve legislative gridlock in New York state; served as special counsel on the Joint

Commission on Public Ethics, Ethics Reforms,

and New York State Recovery Reforms; and led a constitutional challenge to the New York State Supreme Court Selection Process.

When working with young lawyers, Creelan always advocates working with needy clients beyond the big ticket cases.

“Pro bono work is the single best way to obtain critical trial skills as an attorney, short of working in a prosecutor’s office or providing legal services to the poor on a full-time basis,” he said. “That said, at Jenner & Block we have no trouble inspiring our associates to engage in pro bono work; they are terrifically inspired on their own and, in many instances, inspire us old folks more than the reverse.”

—Phil Albinus