



Legal Aid Society
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MAKING JUSTICE REAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**JOHN HEINTZ AND AVIS BUCHANAN TO BE HONORED BY LEGAL AID WITH
THE SERVANT OF JUSTICE AWARD**

WASHINGTON, January 8, 2020— The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia announced that it will be honoring [John E. Heintz](#) and [Avis E. Buchanan](#) with the Servant of Justice Award at the 31st Annual [Servant of Justice Awards Dinner](#) taking place on April 22 at the J.W. Marriott in Washington, DC.

John Heintz is a litigator and partner in Blank Rome’s policyholder-only insurance recovery practice. Mr. Heintz, who is well regarded across the insurance market for his significant experience handling complex coverage litigation, has made pro bono work a central part of his career for 40 years. In [Wai v. Allstate](#), for example, he helped win a ruling on “insurance redlining” at the DC Circuit that commercial insurance companies could not force landlords to purchase costlier insurance policies just because they rented homes to people with disabilities. Later he and his colleagues won a ruling that fair housing organizations had stated a disparate impact claim under the FHA for redlining in the homeowners insurance market in [National Fair Housing Alliance v. Prudential](#). He served as a fellow at the [Neighborhood Legal Services Program](#) in the 1970s, and has served on Legal Aid’s Board of Trustees since 2009. At Blank Rome, he has taken on several pro bono cases in partnership with Legal Aid, and mentored associates on dozens more.

“He has a great understanding of the realities of the lives of Legal Aid clients and works to ensure they receive the best legal representation possible,” said Beth Harrison, Supervising Attorney in Legal Aid’s Housing Law Unit.

“It has been a great privilege working with Legal Aid for many years to advance the fight for fair and equal access to justice for those who need it most,” said Mr. Heintz. “I have enormous respect for the organization’s leadership and staff, and their tireless commitment to the important work that they do on behalf of their clients. I am honored and humbled to be recognized by Legal Aid with this award.”

Avis Buchanan has served as Director of the [Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia](#) (PDS) since 2004. She previously served at PDS in the roles of deputy director, staff attorney, and intern investigator. She also worked at the Washington Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs as an attorney and later as director of its equal employment opportunity project.

Ms. Buchanan has dedicated her career to criminal defense, and litigating individual and class action employment and public accommodations cases. She is the recipient of numerous awards, most recently the 2018 Celebration of Service Award from Rising for Justice, the 2016 Thurgood Marshall

Award from the DC Bar, and the 2014 President's Award for Public Service from the Washington Council of Lawyers.

"Being selected for the Servant of Justice Award is a high compliment. I appreciate Legal Aid affirming that their goal of making justice real is reflected in the work I have done at PDS and at the Washington Lawyer's Committee," said Ms. Buchanan.

The Servant of Justice Award recognizes individuals or organizations who have demonstrated faithful dedication and remarkable achievement in ensuring that all persons have equal and meaningful access to justice.

"John Heintz and Avis Buchanan genuinely demonstrate in both their personal lives and professional careers what it means to be a 'Servant of Justice,'" said Barbara Rossotti, Past President of Legal Aid, Co-Chair of this year's Servant of Justice Awards Dinner, and a retired partner at Pillsbury. Ms. Rossotti was honored with the Servant of Justice Award in 1991.

Other past honorees include such luminaries as [Anthony Pierce](#), Partner at Akin Gump; [Judith L. Lichtman](#), Senior Advisor and former President of the National Partnership for Women and Families; [Vernon Jordan](#), Senior Counsel at Akin Gump; [Charles Horsky](#), Partner at Covington and advisor to President Kennedy; [Phil Horton](#), Partner at Arnold & Porter; [Vanita Gupta](#), President and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; [Marian Wright Edelman](#), Founder of the Children's Defense Fund; [Seth Waxman](#), Partner at WilmerHale and former Solicitor General; and [Eric H. Holder, Jr.](#), Partner at Covington and former Attorney General.

Sponsorships, tables, and individual tickets for the 31st Annual Servant of Justice Awards Dinner are available. Please reach out to Rob Pergament, Director of Development at (202) 661-5964 or rpergament@legalaiddc.org for information about sponsorships and tables, and [click here to buy tickets](#).

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About Legal Aid

Legal Aid was formed in 1932 to "provide legal aid and counsel to indigent persons in civil law matters and to encourage measures by which the law may better protect and serve their needs." Legal Aid is the oldest general civil legal services program in the District of Columbia. The largest part of our work is comprised of individual representation in housing, domestic violence/family, public benefits, and consumer law, although we also work on immigration law matters and help individuals with the collateral consequences of their involvement with the criminal justice system. From the experiences of our clients, we identify opportunities for law reform, public policy advocacy, and systemic reform litigation. For more information about Legal Aid please visit our website, www.legalaiddc.org, and our blog, www.MakingJusticeReal.Org.