



Lathrop GPM's Matthew Jacober, Alana McMullin, Alex Brown and Bernie Rhodes Honored as Legal Champions at Missouri Lawyers Awards

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KANSAS CITY (Feb. 16, 2024) — Lathrop GPM LLP is proud to announce that attorneys Matthew Jacober, Alana McMullin, Alex Brown and Bernie Rhodes have been honored with Legal Champions Awards at the Missouri Lawyers Awards presented by Missouri Lawyers Media. The Legal Champion Award is presented to plaintiffs' or defense lawyers based on the importance of the principle or policy at stake.

The legal team of Jacober, McMullin and Brown were recognized for their dedicated work to secure Lamar Johnson's release from prison with help from a new law that allows for a pathway to set aside potential wrongful convictions. Johnson was exonerated on Feb. 14, 2023, nearly 30 years after he had been sentenced to life in prison for a murder he did not commit. The Midwest Innocence Project led the team of five attorneys, including Jacober, McMullin and Brown, who donated hundreds of pro bono hours to the effort.

"We were honored to help secure Lamar's rightful release," Jacober said. "The way he reacted to his wrongful incarceration with such grace and dignity is something I don't think I will ever forget. He climbed a mountain that must have seemed insurmountable."

In 2019, attorneys convinced the St. Louis Circuit attorney of Johnson's innocence, but the Missouri Supreme Court blocked efforts to seek a new trial because so much time had passed. Then in 2021, Missouri lawmakers enacted a law enabling prosecutors to request hearings in cases of potential wrongful conviction.

The Legal Champion Award also was presented to Bernie Rhodes to recognize his work defending the Marion County Record against the unprecedented assault on the freedom of the press at the hands of the Marion County Police Department.

On Aug. 11, 2023, police raided the Record's office and the home of one of its owners. Rhodes argued that the police department's actions ran afoul of constitutional law designed to protect freedom of the press. Rhodes' work on the case was in defense of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and a condemnation of the Abuse of Power tactics used in the police raid.



"When people are afraid to come forward, it results in crooked mayors, corrupt politicians and bad businesspeople getting away with nefarious things," Rhodes said. "We must keep working to ensure this won't keep happening."

Rhodes was instrumental in the eventual declaration that there was insufficient evidence to justify the raids, resulting in a withdrawal of the search warrant, causing all seized materials to be returned to the Marion County Register.

All four Lathrop GPM attorneys were honored at the Missouri Lawyers Awards event held Feb. 15, 2024 at the Missouri Athletic Club in St. Louis.