Partner Bernie Rhodes Fights for Health Records Transparency in Wake of COVID-19 Crisis, Named National Law Journal Trailblazer

November 2, 2020

Nov. 2, 2020 - In its November 2020 issue, the *National Law Journal* named Lathrop GPM Partner Bernard J. Rhodes a 2020 Political Activism/1st Amendment Rights Trailblazer. Rhodes' successful enforcement of Missouri's Sunshine Law, calling for government records transparency in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in the publication's recognition of Rhodes as an "agent of change."

Rhodes is a member of the Litigation & Dispute Resolution Practice Group with more than 30 years' experience representing clients in regards to their First Amendment rights. His successful persuasion of Missouri state and local health departments to release COVID-19-related data came on the heels of a significant court victory where Rhodes represented nonprofit genealogy organization Reclaim the Records in *Brooke Ganz, et al. v. Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services*. On behalf of Reclaim the Records, a judge had found Missouri to be in blatant violation of the state's Sunshine Law when it denied access to historical birth and death listings. The Sunshine Law mandates all government records be open to the public unless another law specifically prohibits a record's disclosure, and the judge's 50-plus page opinion demanded the state's cooperation. Following the April 15, 2020, decision and armed with the judge's explicit directive regarding records disclosure, Rhodes confronted local and state health departments and compelled those across the state to allow access to detailed information regarding COVID-19, which may help slow the spread of the coronavirus and ultimately save lives.

More about Rhodes and the Litigation & Dispute Resolution Practice Group's efforts to enforce open records laws and ensure access to COVID-19-related data is available in the Lathrop GPM Legal Alert, "No Choice in the Matter - Recent Victory for Lathrop GPM Client to Have Significant Impact on Government Disclosure of Coronavirus-Related Data."