



RK ALUMNI CONNECT

NEWSLETTER

ABOUT RK ALUMNI CONNECT

[RK Alumni Connect](#) is a networking group for current and former Robins Kaplan attorneys. We provide forums for learning and professional development, an alumni website, CLE/professional development and training, community service activities, diversity & inclusion programming, pro bono opportunities, and networking and social events.

Visit us on [LinkedIn](#) or our [RK Alumni Connect](#) web page to stay current on updates from Robins Kaplan, get news about former colleagues, and receive information on a variety of legal developments, as we continue to build years of friendships.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

We got a chance to catch up with former Robins Kaplan attorney Alan McKenna to see what he is up to now. Read on to check out his current endeavors and accomplishments!



ALAN MCKENNA

Chief Legal & Administrative Officer
Wahlburgers
Robins Kaplan Associate 2002 - 2010

Where are you working now? How long have you worked there?

I am the Chief Legal & Administrative Officer at the Wahlburgers restaurant company. I joined Wahlburgers as its first ever VP & General Counsel in May 2019.

What made you decide to take this career path?

I had done work for Wahlburgers on an outside counsel basis for several years. When they asked me to consider joining the company as its first General Counsel back in 2019, my first thought was "no more billing time, I'm in." The fact I was familiar with the business and understood the growth strategy made the decision to join Wahlburgers an easy one. I also knew that the Wahlberg brothers cared deeply about the business and were "all in" on making Wahlburgers successful. Not only that but I was familiar with the brothers' commitment to philanthropy and making a positive impact in every community we serve.

What does a typical workday include for you?

I am still waiting for two days to be similar! As the only in-house lawyer of a fast-paced, growing business, I am busy managing all legal aspects of the business, from simple contracts to large development deals. This year my role expanded to take on the added function of Chief Administrative Officer so I now get to spend a good portion of my day as a member of our senior executive team helping to run the business day-to-day. This dual function results in typical days where I participate in culinary discussion and food tasting (a huge perk of the job!), and then transition to negotiate an LOI for a new development deal. The fast-paced growth environment keeps me busy. I'd have it no other way.

What is the most fulfilling part of your job?

While my legal background got me here, the most fulfilling part for me personally is playing a key role in growing our business and brand. Throughout my career, I have always enjoyed learning about a client's business and developing strategies to handle matters in a manner that fosters business success. Here at Wahlburgers, it is an exciting time in our development, which allows me to work on many different projects. Aside from the business role, getting to mentor our up-and-coming team members is a close second for me and a part of my role that I thoroughly enjoy.

Is there anything in particular you learned while working at Robins Kaplan that is useful to you in your current role?

Not that I necessarily learned it at Robins Kaplan, but the firm's unwavering commitment to helping those less fortunate has always stuck with me during my career. Fortunately, Wahlburgers shares the same beliefs and commitment to helping others, which provides many opportunities for me to get involved in helping our communities. Aside from that, I learned the hard way that the mosquito may be the state bird of Minnesota ... and that NITA is a ton of fun!

If you are willing, please share some information about your favorite hobbies or interests that fill your free time.

With 3 kids (ages 16, 13 and 7) active in sports, my wife and I spend most of our free time at hockey rinks and lacrosse fields, which we love. In those rare moments not at a sporting event, we enjoy boating and golf.

If you could create a new law or policy, what would it be?

A lawyer wellness policy aimed at eliminating the billable hour and rewarding quality over quantity.



PRO BONO



COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORT

We are grateful to our *pro bono* clients and partner organizations for being a source of life-affirming hope as we work together to protect the interests of our *pro bono* clients and to advance the public good. Read our Community and *Pro Bono* Programs report to find out more about the following:

- Robins Kaplan's work vindicating treaty rights for American Indian tribes;
- Recent asylum victories for an immigrant wrongfully convicted of forgery, and an LGBTQ+ activist;
- The firm's commitment to racial justice and racial justice *pro bono* work;
- Robins Kaplan private foundation contributions in 2020; and
- The diverse network of non-profit organizations our attorneys support through board service.

VIEW THE FULL REPORT [HERE](#).





FROM BLURBS TO SUPERB: THE JOURNEY OF CREATING A BLOG

MIKE REIF
Partner

It all started with a new baby.

Seven years ago, I was working on a large case team on litigation against the major ratings agencies over risk grades they gave to failed residential mortgage-backed securities. One of my colleagues was tasked with tracking RMBS news and occasionally updating the team on developments in the news. At a time when bond-holders were looking to recoup losses through lawsuits, there were plenty of updates.

In early 2014, this colleague went on paternity leave, and I took over for him as the RMBS-news guy. I kept his basic format—writing a short summary blurb about an article and providing a hyperlink to the source—but I also tried to make it my own. I expanded the scope of the update to include other news items of interest in the financial industries field, broadened the sources from which I sought out stories, started sending out the update daily, and included a last item each day unrelated to business news that caught my eye while browsing.

Pretty soon, firm members outside of my case team heard about the updates and asked to be included, and my email distribution list grew each morning. The case that prompted the suit wrapped at the end of 2014, but by then Moses Ehlers joined the firm as a social media specialist. I worked with him to develop the firm's blog platform, where my financial news update became a routine workday posting as The Daily Dose, a hyperlinked summary of the day's top business news. And that's how it remains today, all these years later. In addition to living on the firm's website and being cross-posted on Twitter and LinkedIn, the Daily Dose also appears on JD Supra each day, where it regularly draws over 25,000 views each month.



To call the blog a labor of love is probably a stretch, but it's definitely become a meaningful part of my life at the firm. True, there have been plenty of mornings where I would have enjoyed an extra hour of sleep before that alarm went off, and the five-days-a-week schedule on top of billable work can occasionally make it feel like an albatross around my neck (and probably

best not to ask how my wife feels about it). But I'm also at the point where I can't imagine starting my work day without the time I spend, coffee in hand, poring over the morning's business news, finding stories that pique my interest, deciding how to put my own spin on each one, and sending off for publication.

Beyond the routine, the blog has brought other benefits. After years of assiduously avoiding business news, I now live in it each day, and I have opened my eyes to the world of economics, financial markets, central banking, cryptocurrencies, and international trade. Doing so has enabled me to talk shop with clients and potential clients in a wide range of industries, to alert in-house contacts to news items affecting their work, and to think about trends in business and the law in new ways. And as important, the blog prompts me to put fingers to keyboard every day to generate content and hone my writing.

So, seven years in, I'm still writing, and I hope you'll consider giving it a read as part of your own workdays. I welcome your thoughts and feedback on how I can better tailor it to your business and legal interests and needs.

Read the latest Financial Daily Dose [here](#).

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES, TRAININGS & CLINICS

These opportunities are suitable for licensed attorneys in any setting. If you have questions about these, or would like to collaborate with a Robins Kaplan attorney on any of these opportunities, please contact *Pro Bono* Counsel Lindsey Hanson at LHanson@RobinsKaplan.com.

BOSTON



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT (VLP)

- Get certified to provide limited assistance representation through Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP). This will allow you to take a case for a limited time period or for a limited purpose, such as for a specific hearing. VLP has a wide variety of cases available including appeals, consumer and bankruptcy, employment, family law and guardianship, housing, and probate. You can access this on-demand training [here](#).
- Provide 30-minute phone consultations for low-income clients at a time that is convenient for you. VLP will provide you with background information before the call. Training materials are available.

CALIFORNIA



Neighborhood Legal Services
of Los Angeles County

NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES OF LOS ANGELES

- Remove barriers to employment by helping clients with expungement petitions and criminal record clearing remedies. Volunteers analyze criminal records, complete legal forms, write the final declaration, and meet with clients remotely. Pre-recorded online trainings can be completed at your own pace and NLSLA's team is available for ongoing support and guidance. Clinics are held on the second Wednesday of each month from 10 AM to 2 PM.



PRO BONO TRAINING INSTITUTE

- You can find free on-demand CLEs for pro bono cases through the Pro Bono Training Institute [here](#). There are many trainings available covering a wide variety of case types including adjustment of status, asylum, naturalization, DACA, deportation defense, domestic violence restraining orders, health care directives, expungement, unlawful detainers/evictions, and veterans benefits.

MINNEAPOLIS



TUBMAN

- Access an on-demand version of Tubman Safety Project's training for new attorneys [here](#). This training will prepare you to represent victim-survivors of domestic violence in Order for Protection (OFP) cases.

NEW YORK



VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS

- The new attorney orientation training for Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts is available online [here](#). To see a list of cases available through VLA, check their website [here](#).



PAST EVENTS

[CREATING THE AUDIT CLAUSE FOR TODAY'S COMPLIANCE REVIEW](#)

(Recording Available) | April 28, 2021 | Bryan J. Mechell

[11TH ANNUAL DISABILITY JUSTICE SEMINAR: THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES](#)

(Recording Available, Passcode: ko87*Ja%) | May 7, 2021

[UNDERSTANDING THE WORKINGS OF THE MINNESOTA APPELLATE COURT SYSTEM](#)

(Resources Available) | May 11, 2021 | Eric J. Magnuson



As we emerge from a strange and unique year, we are celebrating our re-entry into the world and radiating our pride as members of and allies to the LGBTQ community, we must continue to ask ourselves how we can make our world more welcoming, more inclusive, more just, and safer for all communities. Last year, we marked Pride by reaffirming our solidarity with communities of color in standing against police brutality and harassment, pledging to remember the Black lives lost too soon and unjustly.

In 2021, the pattern of senseless murders of trans women, especially trans women of color, has continued. Just recently, the Boston community mourned the loss of Jahaira DeAlto, a community activist who was the 21st trans person murdered in 2021 alone. And we are now facing a tidal wave of proposed and enacted state legislation aimed at trans youth—preventing access to lifesaving healthcare, sports competition, and appropriate bathrooms.

As one of the matriarchs of the LGBTQ movement, Marsha P. Johnson, powerfully stated, “There is no pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.” Robins Kaplan and the LGBTQ community celebrated Pride Month as we continue to work for the dignity and common humanity for all of us.

Our Pride Month CLE featured panelists Jess Braverman from Gender Justice and Heron Greenesmith from Political Research Associates who focused on issues facing the trans and larger LGBTQ community in terms of legislation and litigation. Specific topics included:

- Access to healthcare
- Sports competition
- Public accommodations
- Civil rights of transgender inmates

SPEAKERS: Legal Director Jess Braverman of Gender Justice
Senior Research Analyst Heron Greenesmith of Political Research Associates

MODERATOR: Robins Kaplan Associate Rebecca Bact

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our speakers will be sharing their expertise in several upcoming events. Contact Jasmine Bradford at JBradford@RobinsKaplan.com for registration information.

MENTAL HEALTH & RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE

August 10, 2021

Join the Women of Robins Kaplan and the Family Resource Group for an important conversation with Mandi J. Buckner MHA, CCC, CPS. This webinar will cover strategies for building resilient employees by helping them achieve their goals for wellbeing and recovery and maximized productivity and engagement. If you would like access to the event, please contact Jasmine Bradford at JBradford@RobinsKaplan.com.

DOMESTICATING AN OUT OF STATE JUDGMENT IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

August 24, 2021

CONFERENCE OF TRIBAL LENDING COMMISSIONERS MID-YEAR UPDATE

August 26, 2021

19TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT BENEFITTING MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL OLYMPICS

September 23, 2021

CURRENT ROBINS KAPLAN JOB OPENINGS

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATE

Full Time | Minneapolis, MN

ESTATE PLANNING STAFF ATTORNEY

Full Time | Minneapolis, MN

SENIOR TAX & ESTATE PLANNING PARALEGAL

Full Time | Minneapolis, MN

PROJECT REVIEW ATTORNEY

Full Time | Minneapolis, MN

Robins Kaplan LLP is an equal opportunity employer committed to building a diverse workforce. Candidates should apply on-line at www.RobinsKaplan.com/Careers



ALUMNI TRIBUTE



DAVID P. SWENSON

ROBINS KAPLAN ASSOCIATE
AND PARTNER, 1995-2013

David Swenson, a former associate and partner with the firm, passed away peacefully on June 28, 2021 after a difficult battle with pancreatic cancer. David was only 53 at the time of his passing.

David received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1994 and became a clerk for Judge Edward Parker at the Minnesota Court of Appeals. He joined Robins Kaplan in 1995 and immediately became involved in the Unocal patent litigation cases in Los Angeles, California. But before that case would conclude, David was offered a clerkship at Federal Circuit Court of Appeals. He moved to Washington, DC and clerked for Judge Giles Rich during the 1996-97 term and then for Judge Pauline Newman during 1997-98.

David then returned to the firm following this clerkship. He again became involved in the Unocal case, this time as part of the FTC investigation into California's adoption of standards relating to Unocal's patents. Throughout David's career, he was asked to be involved in the most difficult of cases, often drafting and arguing for reversals at the appellate level involving complex technology. He was extraordinarily successful because of his creative, thorough, and exacting legal analysis. David left Robins Kaplan in 2013 and continued his success, being named as part of Patent Litigation Law Firm of the Year in 2018 and of America's Top High Stakes Litigators for 2019. He had most recently joined Patterson Thuermer IP as litigation practice chair.

David served his community in many ways by working on a wide variety of matters. He earned the Equal Justice Award in Advocacy from the Council on Crime and Justice. He was involved in a host of pro bono matters, including immigration, asylum cases, adoptions, as well as matters serving veterans and the homeless. He had a special affinity for our four-legged friends and served them through work with several organizations such as The Humane Society, Second Chance Rescue and Almost Home Shelter. He will be remembered as a beloved mentor and friend to many. David is survived by his devoted wife and love of his life Angela Swenson and their three young children.

To support the Swenson family during this time, visit their [GoFundMe page](#).

ALL ATTORNEY DINNER



As part of our annual All Attorney Meeting, Robins Kaplan partners held outdoor dinners as a way for our attorneys to reconnect with friends and colleagues.

PHOTOS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

1. Robins Kaplan attorneys enjoy food, drinks, and the nice weather in Ron Schutz's backyard.
2. Firm members sip, socialize, and enjoy Soul Bowl at Brandon Vaughn's home.
3. Firm members pose for a photo op at Tara Sutton and Gary Wilson's house.
4. Attorneys trade stories over dessert at Jamie Kurtz's house.





TIPS FROM OUR BITS* TEAM

This tip is tiny and simple, yet will save you a bit of time every single day.

When surfing on our phones or addressing an email, we need to type the suffix of any given address. It may take you a couple seconds to type the “.com, .net, .org, .edu, or .us” at the end of each address – and perish the thought you mistype and have to backspace.



Press and hold the period key. Simple as that! A list of suffixes will appear (see highlight below). By default, “.com” is selected. If you want to choose a different suffix: without lifting, move your finger to the suffix you want to type and lift to enter it.

Note: This will only work on your smartphone.

*Business Innovation and Technology Services

RK ALUMNI CONTACT INFO

Please feel free to contact Jasmine if you’d like to share released publications, job postings at your place of business, or if you’d like to be featured in our Alumni Spotlight.



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