

ConnecticutLawTribune

Distinguished Leaders: Daniel Halston, WilmerHale

By Alm Staff

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Daniel Halston is a partner with Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr.

What inspired you to become a lawyer, and what keeps you inspired?

From an early age, I was instilled with the importance of service to others and a willingness to share one's talents for the benefit of others. Those values came from my parents, 12 years of Catholic education, and then a series of mentors who all emphasized that a duty towards and a service of others leads to a life of purpose. After working as an intern in the public defender's office in college and then as a paralegal in Manhattan Criminal Court, and some debate on whether to pursue a life in academia, I decided to pursue becoming a lawyer as it appealed to me as a more active and engaged life of service. I never anticipated that most of my life as a lawyer would be at a large law firm, but I joined one where pro bono service is part of its DNA. A healthy amount of pro bono service and collegial, brilliant colleagues has kept me inspired over the past 35 years.

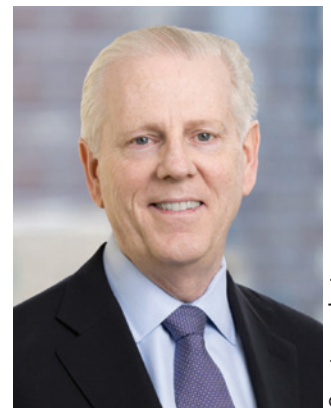
Please describe work on a recent case or issue that has made you proud.

I have devoted a considerable amount of my work over my years in practice to the pro bono representation of veterans, prisoners, and the homeless. A recent area of focus has been representing Medicaid-eligible youth in a class action seeking access to mental health services. In 2022, after 20 years of litigation, including a trial led by two of my now retired partners and monitoring of the judgment against the commonwealth, our WilmerHale team, and co-counsel Center for Public Representation, completed our representation of the long-running pro bono matter

captioned *Rosie D. v. the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts. The matter was brought on behalf of Medicaid-eligible children under 21 who were not being provided with preventive and rehabilitative treatment by the commonwealth of Massachusetts, as required by the federal Medicaid program. The court concluded that the litigation and work of the parties created a "comprehensive system of services to rectify an embarrassing and systemic failure of the commonwealth to comprehensively address the needs of its emotionally disturbed children." The court described the case as a "resounding success benefitting the children in need on whose behalf it was brought." The court terminated the litigation finding the state was now in substantial compliance with the judgment.

What qualities should a lawyer possess to become a successful and effective leader?

Among other qualities, I think a leader should possess a willingness to listen to opposing viewpoints and a healthy dose of humility before making up one's mind and reaching a final decision; hard work (no way around it) and a pursuit of excellence; courtesy towards others and a recognition that everyone counts; a healthy appreciation for history and that, more often than not, you are not writing on a clean slate; and a deep gratitude for the advice of others.



Daniel Halston, with WilmerHale.

Courtesy photo