



Washington State Bar Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Joanne M. Hepburn Named Recipient of WSBA Pro Bono Award

(SEATTLE) — The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) Board of Governors takes great pleasure in announcing that K&L Gates attorney **Joanne M. Hepburn**, along with her colleague **Thomas E. Kelly Jr.**, is the 2011 recipient of the WSBA Pro Bono Award. The awards will be presented on June 4 at the Access to Justice/Bar Leaders Conference at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick.

Hepburn and Kelly are being honored for their representation of Larry Bill Elliott in his state *habeas* proceedings and then in his federal *habeas* proceedings, from 2004–2009. There were also a number of other lawyers and staff at their firm, K&L Gates LLP, who worked on the case with them. Over the course of the pro bono representation, Hepburn contributed more than 1,900 hours to the case.

In 2001, Elliott was charged with two murders in Virginia. He maintained his innocence throughout the process but was convicted and sentenced to death. K&L Gates became involved in the case through its participation in an American Bar Association-sponsored program in which large firms volunteer their resources to assist in state and federal *habeas corpus* petitions. The case ultimately went to the U.S. Supreme Court, but only three justices ruled for a stay. Hepburn and Kelly prepared a comprehensive clemency petition to the Virginia governor asking him to commute the sentence, but although the governor extended the deadline for the execution so his staff would have additional time to investigate, and the legal team provided supplemental information, the governor declined to intervene and Elliott was executed. Elliott, who was age 60 at the time of his death, was a college graduate who had served with distinction for nearly 30 years in the Army and had no previous arrests. A statement Elliott had asked Kelly to read outside the prison after the execution read in part: “I want to thank you [referring to all of the attorneys and staff at K&L Gates who had worked on the case] for all of your efforts, especially the fact that you were able to discover and present evidence of my innocence that should lead any objective reviewer of facts to conclude that I am innocent of the murders.”

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Working Together to Champion Justice

Hepburn received her B.A. degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota and her J.D. degree *cum laude* from Boston University School of Law. She is a senior associate in the firm of K&L Gates LLP, where she has practiced in its Seattle office since 2002. Her practice focuses on business litigation, including contractual disputes, intellectual property litigation, and employment litigation. Hepburn also has significant mediation and arbitration experience. She currently serves on the board of the Mother Attorneys Mentoring Association of Seattle.

About the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA is part of the judicial branch, exercising a governmental function authorized by the Washington State Supreme Court to license the state's 34,460 lawyers. The WSBA both regulates lawyers under the authority of the Court and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. As a regulatory agency, the WSBA administers the bar admission process, including the bar exam; provides record-keeping and licensing functions; and administers the lawyer-discipline system. As a professional association, the WSBA provides continuing legal education for attorneys, in addition to numerous other educational and member-service activities.

The governance of the WSBA is vested in its Board of Governors. There are three governors from the seventh congressional district; one from each of the other eight districts; and three at-large, one of whom represents the Young Lawyers Division. The president is **Steven G. Toole**, of Bellevue. The president-elect is **Stephen R. Crossland**, of Cashmere, and the immediate past-president is **Salvador A. Mungia**, of Tacoma. The Board meets regularly (every six weeks) at various locations around the state, and its meetings are open to the public. Much of the work of the Bar is carried out through its numerous standing committees, 27 sections, and a Young Lawyers Division with its many committees.

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