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## William H. Gates II, Legal Luminaries Celebrated at 2021 Washington State Bar Association APEX Awards

**SEATTLE, Dec. 14, 2021** — The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) last night hosted [the 2021 APEX Awards](#), honoring 14 outstanding legal professionals and organizations throughout the state. The APEX – Acknowledging Professional Excellence – Awards recognize extraordinary contributions made to the legal community, Washington, and beyond.

In 12 categories, the awards acknowledge the recipients' impacts in areas such as access to justice, diversity, and public service. **The recipients include:**

- **Award of Merit: David A. Perez.** Nominations for Perez centered on his pro bono work protecting Seattle “Black Lives Matter” protestors during the 2020 racial justice movement. His work resulted in a temporary restraining order against the use of chemical irritants and projectiles by police and, after police violated the order, a stipulated injunction and finding of civil contempt against the city of Seattle. “After witnessing repeated and blatant violations of protestors’ constitutional rights, we had to act,” Perez said.
- **Angelo Petrus Award for Lawyers in Government Service: Julian M. Bray** (posthumously). Bray spent most of his career representing the Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families through the Washington Attorney General’s Office. He helped found the Pierce County chapter of Lawyers Helping Hungry Children and volunteered on the city of Tacoma’s Human Services Commission. Supporters noted he was a significant factor in the success of the Family Recovery Court in Pierce County and led the development of the first Baby Court in Washington.
- **Justice Charles Z. Smith Excellence in Diversity Award: James F. Williams.** Williams is a managing partner at Perkins Coie LLP where he litigates complex business cases. His extensive pro bono work includes *Wilbur v. City of Mt. Vernon*, 989 F. Supp. 2d 1122 (W.D. Wash. 2013), which led to substantial reforms protecting the right to counsel in Washington. The award also recognizes Williams’s leadership roles in community service organizations such as the Washington Leadership Institute, Treehouse, and the Metropolitan Seattle Urban League.
- **Legal Innovation Award: Jacqueline G. Schafer.** Schafer’s nominations centered around her groundbreaking work developing Clearbrief.AI, a program that uses artificial intelligence to review citations in legal writing, particularly for child welfare and foster care systems.
- **Lifetime Service Award: William H. Gates II** (posthumously). The award recognized Gates’ work as a role model, mentor, and friend who left an indelible impression on the community through his law practice; his advocacy for tax fairness and diversity in the legal profession; and his service to many nonprofit, philanthropic, and civic entities. He served as president of both the Seattle-King County Bar Association

(now the King County Bar Association) and WSBA.

- **Norm Maleng Leadership Award: Edmund R. Witter.** Witter serves the Housing Justice Project as the senior managing attorney. His nominators emphasized his commitment to racial justice and equity and his advocacy for improved housing legislation. They stressed that he “embodies commitment to access to civil legal aid, advocacy for marginalized communities, and a willingness to change the material conditions preventing tenants from fully exercising their rights.”
- **Outstanding Judge Award: Chief Justice Gerry L. Alexander (Ret.).** Washington Supreme Court Chief Justice Alexander’s nomination described how he personifies what the chief should be: smart, hardworking, humble, having a keen understanding of the law and stare decisis. He succeeded in adapting to changing times, maintaining the peace among his fellow justices, and dedicating his bench to public outreach.
- **Outstanding Young Lawyer Award: Paul Heer.** Heer’s pro bono service goes far beyond the norm and includes a successful clemency petition unanimously supported by the state Clemency & Pardons Board. Many advocacy groups take advantage of Heer’s advice and mentorship and use his pro bono work as a template in civil rights litigation and training for the next generation of advocates.
- **Pro Bono and Public Service Award (for Individual): Master Chief Petty Officer Sally A. Webster.** Webster took the unusual step of volunteering for the Navy Reserve five years after starting in the legal department at Microsoft, where she is now a senior attorney. She went on to serve tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. She achieved the highest positions possible for an enlisted reservist, command master chief of the Navy Reserve Law Program and the senior enlisted advisor to the deputy judge advocate general for Reserve Affairs and Operations. She also volunteered with organizations helping unaccompanied immigrant children and Microsoft’s military veteran employee network.
- **Pro Bono and Public Service Award (for Group): Virtual Help, a collaboration between Perkins Coie, Microsoft, and Legal Hope.** Virtual Help responded to domestic abuse survivors’ urgent need for access to courts following the early coronavirus restrictions. The groups collaborated to create an innovative program facilitating remote access to courts and pro bono counsel.
- **Professionalism Award: Lt. Col. Melanie J. Mann.** Mann served as a Marine Corps Judge Advocate General (JAG) officer in prosecution and defense roles for many years before assuming the role of military judge in 2020. She maintained momentum on her docket and was instrumental in keeping recruits’ basic training on schedule despite coronavirus restrictions. Her work also opened the door for the first transgender Marine recruits and the integration of women into combat roles. Prosecution and defense groups across the Marine Corps employ training and certification programs she developed.
- **Sally P. Savage Leadership in Philanthropy Award: Karen W. Murray.** Murray’s supporters highlighted this distinguished social justice advocate’s years of service as a public defender and mentor. Supporters particularly emphasized her enthusiasm for the King County Bar Association’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Luncheon Committee.

A recording of the full broadcast is available on-demand at <https://www.wsba.org/apex>. Individual videos honoring each APEX award winner will be available on the [Washington State Bar Association YouTube channel](#).

**About the Washington State Bar Association**

The WSBA operates under the delegated authority of the Washington Supreme Court to license the state's more than 40,000 lawyers and other legal professionals. In furtherance of its obligation to protect and serve the public, the WSBA both regulates lawyers and other legal professionals and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA's mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice. For more information, visit [www.wsba.org](http://www.wsba.org).

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