



Richard K. Gilbert
**POLICY
ADVOCACY
COMPETITION**

Hosted by DC Justice Lab



MARCH 29, 2025

John A. Wilson Building,
Council of the District of Columbia





CHALLENGE

&



MOTIVATION

Every day, D.C. policy leaders & community advocates seek to solve issues such as senseless gun violence, access to education, and health disparities. Tackling these social inequities often requires legislative action, including the enactment or amendment of laws. Unfortunately, advocates, community members, and government employees frequently find that the proposed legislation falls short. One effective way to improve the quality of legislation is to enhance law students' skills and offer structured opportunities to increase capacity for those who craft and help pass laws.



To watch the 2024 video:

CLICK HERE



For more photos from 2024:

CLICK HERE

ABOUT THE EVENT

DC Justice Lab will host a 2nd annual law school competition, styled like a mock trial and moot court, focusing on legislative advocacy. Last year's event was a remarkable success. Five teams participated from law schools. Over the course of the day, 60 attendees observed and contributed to the learning. Among those were law school students, professors, lawyers, advocates, legislative staffers, and 15 competition judges, including 5 DC council members, who provided each team with constructive feedback. This competition is not just a test for students; it's a celebration of the vital role of legislative advocacy and DC Justice Lab's contributions.

We ignite excitement among law students for legislative advocacy and careers. The event provides a unique opportunity for students to hone their legal skills in the policy realm, including legal analysis, research, and written and oral communication. Your investment will generate innovative ideas for legislation that drive real change.

Equally important, the competition diversifies the talent pipeline for legislative staff and policy advocacy fields by attracting students from D.C.-area law schools and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Commit to support the next generation of legislative advocates. **Your sponsorship will help strengthen the success and impact.**

Location:

**John A. Wilson District Building, 1350
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Washington, DC 20004**

Date and time:

**March 29, 2025. The competition
will be followed by an evening
reception and celebration.**



FORMAT

This year, eight teams will compete. Teams will respond to the competition problem by proposing legislation and creating a fact sheet to explain their proposal. Mock legislative hearings will test teams' oral advocacy skills for their bills. These hearings will take place at the seat of the D.C. Council and Mayor, in the John A. Wilson Building. Judges will score teams on their written work and oral advocacy, advancing through rounds in a tournament-style format.

Judges will include attorneys, lawmakers, and public policy professionals recruited for their expertise in policy advocacy. The competition will conclude with an awards presentation and reception, where the winning team will receive a \$5,000 prize.



KEY DATES

DCJL.

**AUGUST 15,
2024**

Registration opens.

**NOVEMBER 1,
2024**

Registration closes

**NOVEMBER 22,
2024**

Problem released.

**JANUARY 29,
2025**

Written submission due.

**MARCH 2,
2025**

Three rounds of oral
advocacy & awards reception.

**MARCH 29,
2025**

Oral advocacy rounds and
awards reception.



HONOREE

RICHARD K. GILBERT



The event honors Richard K. Gilbert, a champion of legal justice who believed that lawyers must help individual clients and improve society by changing laws for the better. Over his 40-year career representing clients in local and federal criminal cases, Rich was a founding member of the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project, served on the boards of the Council for Court Excellence and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and contributed to drafting standard jury instructions for the District of Columbia. As an adjunct professor at American University Washington College of Law, he was a forceful advocate for criminal justice reform and a mentor to DC Justice Lab's founding executive director, Patrice Sulton. The Gilbert Policy Advocacy Competition honors Rich's passion and commitment to mentoring younger lawyers to become change agents.

ABOUT DC JUSTICE LAB



DC
JUSTICE
LAB.

Launched in 2020 with The George Washington University Law School students, DC Justice Lab is a team of law and policy experts dedicated to researching, organizing, and advocating for large-scale changes to the District of Columbia's criminal legal system. We develop smarter safety solutions that are evidence-driven, community-rooted, and racially just, aiming to transform the District's approach to public safety and position it as a national leader in justice reform.

Students working with DC Justice Lab learn how attorneys play an active and supportive role in shaping local policies that directly impact daily life. From the outset, they are encouraged to consider which social problems and solutions have been overlooked and to investigate why. This process involves analyzing statutes, case law, court rules, administrative orders, and common practices. It also requires listening to organizers and justice-impacted individuals to understand which rules are followed and their effects.

CONTACT

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