DCJL.

2027

Richard K. Gilbert
POLICY ADVOCACY COMPETITION

Hosted by DC Justice Lab

APRIL 3, 2027

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

CHALLENGE & MOTIVATION

Every day, DC 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.

ABOUT THE EVENT

DC Justice Lab will host our 4th annual law school competition, styled like a mock trial and moot court, focusing on legislative advocacy. Our inaugural event was a remarkable success and last year, eight teams participated from eight different law schools. Over the course of the day, attendees observed and contributed to the learning. Among those were law school students, professors, lawyers, advocates, legislative staffers, and 21 competition judges, including 3 DC Councilmembers, who provided each team with constructive feedback. 12 competition judges provided written feedback to the students before the event. 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 to the field of movement lawyering.

We inspire law students to engage in legislative advocacy and pursue related 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 DC-area law schools and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

Join us in supporting the next generation of legislative advocates. **Your sponsorship will help strengthen both our success and impact.**

Competition:

April 3, 2027 from 10am to 4:30pm
John A. Wilson Building,
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

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 office visits & legislative hearings will test teams' oral advocacy skills for their bills. These hearings will take place at the seat of the DC 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 $3,000 prize and the runner-up team will receive a $1,000 prize.

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.

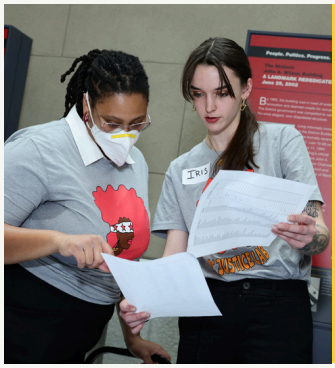
ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

SERVE AS A JUDGE

Judges will score and provide feedback to teams on their written work product and oral advocacy performances.

VOLUNTEER AS STUDENT TEAM COACH

Coaches will support teams in the development of their skills as applied through participating in the competition.



VOLUNTEER TO SUPPORT EVENT LOGISTICS

DC Justice Lab is looking for volunteers to support final event planning for the month prior and day-of logistics.

SPONSOR

Show your commitment to equity and justice by selecting a financial partnership level.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Thank you for selecting a partnership level that demonstrates your commitment to educating & inspiring the next generation.

Gold Sponsor:	**$10,000**
Silver Sponsor:	**$5,000**
Bronze Sponsor:	**$2,500**

GOLD

will receive the following benefits:

- Logo placement on event materials
- Recognition at the reception following the competition
- Inclusion in press releases, quarterly newsletter & Annual Report
- Opportunity to deliver 3–5-minute remarks at the reception
- 10 VIP reception tickets

SILVER

will receive the following benefits:

- Logo placement on monitors
- Recognition at the reception following the competition
- Inclusion in quarterly newsletter & Annual Report
- 5 VIP reception tickets

BRONZE

will receive the following benefits:

- Logo placement on monitors
- Recognition at the reception following the competition
- Inclusion in quarterly newsletter & Annual Report
- 2 VIP reception tickets

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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