

Haynes and Boone Partners With ExxonMobil on Pro Bono

March 7, 2018 John Eldridge, Debbie McComas

PRACTICES Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation, Intellectual Property, Tax

When lawyers from Haynes Boone's Houston office collaborated with ExxonMobil to discuss cybersecurity, employment law and intellectual property issues in late January, it wasn't the usual attorney-client business.

The lawyers were teaming up to provide legal insights and one-on-one assistance for 20 nonprofits funded through United Way of Greater Houston. The event developed through the ongoing community service partnership between Haynes Boone and its longtime client, ExxonMobil.

"We wanted to do something to help organizations that help people in the Houston area," said Haynes Boone Partner [John Eldridge](#), who co-chairs the firm's Pro Bono and Public Service Committee.

Eldridge said this was the second time the firm and ExxonMobil hosted a clinic for Houston nonprofits. A dozen Haynes Boone lawyers and more than 20 lawyers and legal assistants from ExxonMobil volunteered for the daylong event. The United Way and Austin-based Texas CBar, which helps connect nonprofits needing legal services with volunteer lawyers, also were instrumental in organizing the clinic.

Several Haynes Boone lawyers presented overviews of topics that nonprofit groups typically face: Partner [Felicity Fowler](#) discussed employment law, Counsel Pierre Grosdidier handled cybersecurity and Eldridge covered such basics as tax law, bylaws and getting certified by the Texas Secretary of State.

Teams of Haynes Boone and ExxonMobil lawyers then met with nonprofit representatives in confidential sessions to counsel them for about 90 minutes each on specific problems they faced, such as a thorny situation involving employees and a dilemma revolving around a government contract. The sessions included talking through possible options, legal ramifications and strategic considerations.

"When you bring a lot of firepower to an issue for an hour and a half, there's going to be some progress," Eldridge said.

After helping devise a roadmap to a solution, the lawyers would provide information about other volunteer services available if the nonprofit needed follow-up.

In addition to nonprofit counseling, Haynes Boone has partnered with ExxonMobil on assisting veterans with appeals of benefits denials (a project that required specialized training and certification). And the firm joins with ExxonMobil lawyers twice a year to staff the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program's Veterans Legal Clinic, with the next time set for May 4. The projects are part of the firm's commitment to helping those in the community who need legal assistance but are least able to pay.

"It is a privilege to work with clients on pro bono initiatives, especially when we are working with a client like ExxonMobil with such a proven commitment to pro bono work," said Haynes Boone Partner [Debbie McComas](#), who co-chairs the Pro Bono and Public Service Committee with Eldridge. "The energy that ExxonMobil's lawyers bring to the projects helps motivate Haynes Boone lawyers to participate in a broader range of pro bono opportunities. And the broad experience and resources Haynes Boone's lawyers bring to the projects expands the reach of projects ExxonMobil can tackle. The partnership results in more pro bono work being accomplished while building great relationships."