The American Lawyer Selects Laura Lee Prather for Tony Mauro Media Lawyer Award

By Laura Lee Prather | November 5, 2019

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Haynes Boone Partner and free speech advocate Laura Prather will receive *The American Lawyer*'s Tony Mauro Media Lawyer Award next month in recognition of her tireless and successful efforts advocating for legislation to strengthen First Amendment rights in Texas.

The Tony Mauro Award was established this year to honor attorneys who zealously advocate for freedom of the press. The award is named in honor of ALM's longtime correspondent, who recently retired.

George Freeman, executive director of the Media Law Resource Center, nominated Prather for the award, saying she "has changed the legal landscape for free speech rights in Texas."

Prather was selected for the award along with CNN's legal department. The winners will be honored Dec. 4 at the annual *American Lawyer* Industry Awards gala in New York City.

"We had so many worthy submissions for possible nominees that we decided to give two awards, rather than one," said Mauro. "It was heartwarming and uplifting to review the work of so many lawyers who have devoted themselves to protect First Amendment rights on behalf of the press and the public. What they do is crucial to our democracy."

Prather was instrumental in the passage of the three most significant pieces of First Amendment legislation in Texas's recent history — the reporters' privilege, the Defamation Mitigation Act, and the Texas Citizens Participation Act, the state's anti-SLAPP law aimed at deterring baseless, costly lawsuits designed to intimidate and silence journalists and members of the public who speak out.

The Texas anti-SLAPP law was under fire from the Texas legislature in 2019. Prather mobilized a coalition of media outlets and public interest organizations to support the law, and a reform measure was passed that "preserves the integrity" of the law, and "in some instances, makes its protections stronger," Freeman told *The American Lawyer*.

Prather's selection reflects the importance of free press advocacy at the state level through legislation and litigation, the publication states.

"Advocating for free speech rights and government transparency is an honor and a privilege. Tony Mauro, and co-recipients David Vigilante and Drew Shenkman with CNN's legal team, serve as a role models to all who value public access and see the importance of its role in maintaining our democracy," Prather said. "To be recognized with the Tony Mauro award for the advocacy work we've done in these areas is humbling and much appreciated."

Prather has served in various capacities for the Media Law Resource Center, including as a member of its Board of Directors, and past president of the Defense Counsel Section. She was also

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the inaugural chair of its State Legislative committee and currently serves as co-chair of the center's Anti-SLAPP Task Force.

Prather has received numerous accolades for her free speech work. *The American Lawyer* recently named her as one of the 45 best young women lawyers in the nation, and she is the first woman to receive Texas Daily Newspaper Association's "Legacy Award." She was also named a finalist for the Professional Women in Advocacy's 2019 Professional Excellence in Advocacy Awards. In addition, she has been named Texas Association of Broadcasters' "Associate of the Year" and one of *Texas Lawyer*'s "Extraordinary Women in Texas Law." Her clients have recognized her as a BTI Client Service All-Star, and she has been recognized in *Chambers USA*, Chambers and Partners, for Nationwide - First Amendment Litigation (2017-2019).

To read more, click here.

The Texas Lawbook also reported on the win.

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