

# Plunkett Cooney attorneys win federal pro bono service award

October 29, 2014

Attorneys Richard J. Gianino and Ellisse S. Thompson of Plunkett Cooney, one of the oldest and largest law firms in the Midwest, recently received the 2014 Pro Bono Recognition Award from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Gianino and Thompson were honored for their volunteer service in representing a plaintiff assigned to them by the court in a complex disability case featuring elements of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA).

“It was a really rewarding and valuable experience, and it was certainly nice to help someone in need,” said Thompson, who is a member of Plunkett Cooney’s Tort & Litigation Practice Group. “I look forward to helping others in the future.”

While elements of the case are still pending, the attorneys successfully argued that a wheelchair-bound muscular sclerosis patient is entitled to lifetime disability benefits. Additional proceedings in the case will take place next month.

Gianino and Thompson accepted their awards during the Annual State of the Court luncheon on Oct. 1 at the Book Cadillac Hotel in downtown Detroit. The luncheon, which is sponsored annually by the Federal Bar Association’s Eastern District of Michigan Chapter, featured keynote remarks by the court’s Chief Judge Gerald Rosen.

Each year, numerous attorneys who are admitted to practice in the eastern district of Michigan volunteer their services as part of the court’s pro bono program. Gianino, a partner in Plunkett Cooney’s Detroit office, serves as a member of the court’s Pro Bono Council, which assigns matters to participating attorneys.

Gianino is a partner and senior litigator in the firm’s Detroit office. He has devoted his professional career to the representation of insurance companies and healthcare providers in multiple areas of litigation and counseling. Gianino has particular expertise in the areas of ERISA, directors’ and officers’ liability, pharmaceutical liability and insurance law.

Thompson, who is also a member of Plunkett Cooney’s Detroit office, works in the Tort & Litigation Practice Group. Her practice in Michigan’s state and federal courts includes a particular focus on motor vehicle and general liability insurance-related litigation. Her clients include the insured

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policyholders of some of the nation's largest insurance providers.

Established in 1913, Plunkett Cooney employs 150 attorneys in nine Michigan cities, Columbus, Ohio and Indianapolis, Indiana. The firm, which provides a range of transactional and litigation services, has achieved the highest rating (AV) awarded by Martindale-Hubbell, a leading, international directory of law firms. *Fortune* magazine has also named Plunkett Cooney among the top commercial firms in the United States.

*For more information about Richard Gianino and Ellisse Thompson's 2014 Pro Bono Recognition Awards, contact the firm's Practice Development Manager John Cornwell at (248) 901-4008 or [jcornwell@plunkettcooney.com](mailto:jcornwell@plunkettcooney.com).*

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