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‘A Lawyer With Guts’: Keker Attorneys Reflect on the Private Bar’s Role One Year After Trump Sanctions

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In the year since President Trump issued executive orders targeting major law firms, Keker attorneys say the need for the private bar to do more to defend the rule of law has grown, reports Law.com.

The legal fight between the administration and four law firms took a bizarre turn last week after the Justice Department moved to abandon its defense of Trump’s executive orders, only to reverse course the next day and continue pursuing the appeals in the D.C. Circuit.

“I can’t understand for the life of me what they’re doing,” Keker partner Elliot Peters said. “I don’t think the government has a chance of winning on appeal.”

In March 2025, Keker was among the first law firms to condemn Trump’s executive orders publicly. Since then, the firm has joined with nonprofit organizations in multiple lawsuits and class actions to protect individual rights and hold the Trump administration accountable to the rule of law and the Constitution.

Peters said pro bono work is an attorney’s highest calling.

“I think it’s really important for lawyers to do pro bono work and to use their skills as lawyers to help worthy causes, disenfranchised people and people that are powerless. ... I think every lawyer has an obligation to do some of that kind of work,” he said.

Keker partner Steven Ragland, who is representing a class of people detained at an ICE facility in California City, said he was dismayed by the firms that capitulated and cut deals with the administration.

“There has been a retreat, not just among those who signed the devil’s bargain with the Trump administration, but what I’ve heard ... other firms are reticent to sue the government in certain situations, which I hope does not bear out,” he said.

At the same time, Keker’s pro bono work is holding DHS and ICE in check; a federal judge recently ordered the agencies to provide constitutionally adequate medical care, temperature-appropriate clothing and blankets, and meaningful access to legal counsel to the people held in the California City facility. The court also required the appointment of an independent monitor to ensure federal agents followed the orders.

Keker partner Erin Meyer is part of another class action challenging ICE’s practice of re-detaining asylum seekers without legal justification. Those efforts scored a victory in which a court provisionally certified a class and halted the ICE policy that had targeted people showing up for their mandated immigration hearings.

She said that she has been on a “personal mission since last summer to convince people, other private lawyers at law firms, to take on these individual habeas cases that we were part of developing the blueprint for.”

She said associates are responding and pushing partners at other firms to get involved and take on the cases to protect the rights of individuals taken and detained by ICE.

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