

Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts to Honor Proskauer with Founders Award

Proskauer For Good Blog on **March 26, 2019**

A lot has changed since 1969 when a handful of junior associates at Proskauer created [Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts \(VLA\)](#): the world had about half the population it has now, the price of gasoline was around 35 cents per gallon, and the Jets won the Super Bowl. One thing that hasn't changed since then, however, is the need among low income artists and arts-related non-profit organizations for pro bono legal services.

In light of VLA's 50th anniversary gala on April 2nd, where Proskauer will be honored with the organization's "Founders Award," we asked a number of Proskauer lawyers to reflect on their experience with VLA.

Proskauer partner [Robert Kafin](#), one of VLA's founders, recalled that in the early days, VLA did not have any staff but was operated entirely by its board which met periodically at Proskauer. According to Bob, the vision and real driving force behind VLA came from third-year associate Paul Epstein, now a retired partner, who spearheaded the Firm's efforts including the original legal work incorporating the organization.

Over the past 50 years, several Proskauer lawyers have served on the VLA board, and the Firm has undertaken countless pro bono matters through the organization. These matters are among the most popular pro bono assignments at the Firm today.

First-year associate [Jillian Ruben](#) explained that her work with VLA, which in just the first few months of her tenure at the Firm has included several matters, is especially rewarding because it "has allowed me to incorporate my passion for theater into my practice." [Shelina Kurwa](#), a second-year associate, stressed the impact of her work, "VLA gives me the chance to work with artists who often find themselves in a weakened position at the negotiating table because they do not have the funds and resources to match the other side."

According to partner [Margaret Dale](#), vice chair of the litigation department and the latest Proskauer lawyer to serve on VLA's board, "Providing free legal services allows artists to focus on their art. That serves not just the artists but the greater community."

[View Original](#)

[Related Professionals](#)

- **William C. Silverman**

Pro Bono Partner