

John Heintz and Avis Buchanan to be honored, Douglas Emhoff to speak at Legal Aid's Servant of Justice Awards



Legal Aid Society
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

District of Columbia, Washington, D.C, Apr 26, 2021 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia announced that it will be honoring [John E. Heintz](#) and [Avis E. Buchanan](#) with the Servant of Justice Award at the 31st Annual [Servant of Justice Awards Dinner](#) to be held virtually for the first time on April 29, 2021.

This year Legal Aid will have the honor of having Second Gentleman of the United States, [Douglas Emhoff](#), give special remarks at the ceremony. In his position, Mr. Emhoff is devoting his time to the causes of justice, equality, and human rights.

"We are so honored that Second Gentleman Emhoff has chosen to lend his voice to this special evening and that he cares so deeply about making justice a reality for persons living in DC and throughout the Nation," said Eric Angel, Executive Director of Legal Aid.

John Heintz is a litigator and partner in Blank Rome's policyholder-only insurance recovery practice. Mr. Heintz, who is well regarded across the insurance market for his significant experience handling complex coverage litigation, has made pro bono work a central part of his career for 40 years. In [Wai v. Allstate](#), for example, he helped win a ruling on "insurance redlining" at the DC Circuit that commercial insurance companies could not force landlords to purchase costlier insurance policies just because they rented homes to people with disabilities. Later he and his colleagues won a ruling that fair housing organizations had stated a disparate impact claim under the FHA for redlining in the homeowners' insurance market in [National Fair Housing Alliance v. Prudential](#). He served as a fellow at the [Neighborhood Legal Services Program](#) in the 1970s and has served on Legal Aid's Board of Trustees since 2009. At Blank Rome, he has taken on several pro bono cases in partnership with Legal Aid and mentored associates on dozens more.

"He has a great understanding of the realities of the lives of Legal Aid clients and works to ensure they receive the best legal representation possible," said Beth Mellen, Supervising Attorney in Legal Aid's Housing Law Unit.

"It has been a great privilege working with Legal Aid for many years to advance the fight for fair and

equal access to justice for those who need it most,” said Mr. Heintz. “I have enormous respect for the organization’s leadership and staff and their tireless commitment to the important work that they do on behalf of their clients. I am honored and humbled to be recognized by Legal Aid with this award.”

Avis Buchanan has served as Director of the [Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia \(PDS\)](#) since 2004. She previously served at PDS in the roles of deputy director, staff attorney, and intern investigator. She also worked at the Washington Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs as an attorney and later as director of its Equal Employment Opportunity Project.

Ms. Buchanan has dedicated her career to criminal defense and litigating individual and class action employment and public accommodations cases. She is the recipient of numerous awards, most recently the 2018 Celebration of Service Award from Rising for Justice, the 2016 Thurgood Marshall Award from the DC Bar, and the 2014 President’s Award for Public Service from the Washington Council of Lawyers.

“Being selected for the Servant of Justice Award is a high compliment. I appreciate Legal Aid affirming that their goal of making justice real is reflected in the work I have done at PDS and at the Washington Lawyer’s Committee,” said Ms. Buchanan.

The Servant of Justice Award recognizes individuals or organizations who have demonstrated faithful dedication and remarkable achievement in ensuring that all persons have equal and meaningful access to justice.

This year we are excited to announce that we will be broadcasting our events over [Remo](#), a unique platform that mimics the style and feel of a cocktail reception online. Remo will allow our guests to have private conversations and move around the room to interact with fellow guests before beginning our official program. It will also help us recognize event sponsors with virtual billboards and signage on the screen.

Other past honorees include such luminaries as Anthony Pierce, Partner at Akin Gump; Judith L. Lichtman, Senior Advisor and former President of the National Partnership for Women and Families; Vernon Jordan, Senior Counsel at Akin Gump; Charles Horsky, Partner at Covington and advisor to President Kennedy; Phil Horton, Partner at Arnold & Porter; Vanita Gupta, President and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; Marian Wright Edelman, Founder of the Children’s Defense Fund; Seth Waxman, Partner at WilmerHale and former Solicitor General; and Eric H. Holder, Jr., Partner at Covington and former Attorney General.

Sponsorships, tables, and individual tickets for the 32nd Annual Servant of Justice Awards Dinner are available. Please reach out to Rob Pergament, Director of Development, at (202) 661-5964 or rpergament@legalaiddc.org for sponsorships and viewing information.

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About Legal Aid

Legal Aid is the oldest and largest general civil legal services program in the District of Columbia. Legal Aid was created in 1932 with the goal of making justice real – in individual and systemic ways – for persons living in poverty in the District of Columbia. For more than 87 years, Legal Aid lawyers have provided a continuum of legal services to clients in the areas of domestic violence/family, housing, public benefits, immigration, and consumer law. Legal Aid also works to identify systemic issues on

which its advocacy can have an impact beyond an individual client. And its nationally recognized Barbara McDowell Appellate Advocacy Project, which pursues an anti-poverty agenda, litigates important cases affecting persons living in poverty before the DC Court of Appeals every year. For more information about Legal Aid, please visit our website, www.LegalAidDC.org, and our blog, www.MakingJusticeReal.Org.

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