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Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault Bestows Its Annual "Moxie Awards" On Seyfarth Attorneys

Partners Molly Joyce and Allegra Rich receive the award for a pro bono appellate amicus brief they wrote in a case of first impression.

CHICAGO (May 26, 2011) — Leading law firm Seyfarth Shaw LLP is pleased to announce that two partners, Molly Joyce and Allegra Rich, have been honored by the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) for their pro bono work on behalf of a rape victim denied a Civil No Contact Order.

Illinois was the first state to pass a statute creating a Civil No Contact Order, which allows a sexual assault victim to get a restraining order against an attacker even if there is no relationship between the parties. ICASA was instrumental in drafting the statute, getting it passed, and training law enforcement officials and lawyers on how it should be implemented.

To date, more than 1,000 victims in Illinois have obtained the no-contact orders. However, one young woman, J.M., who claimed to be sexually assaulted, was denied a no-contact order by a trial judge. The judge criticized J.M.'s conduct on the night of her rape, questioned her credibility, and essentially "blamed the victim" for the assault.

J.M. appealed the denial of the no-contact order, and ICASA and a group of other sexual assault prevention agencies and victims rights organizations asked Seyfarth Shaw to write an amicus brief in the Illinois Appellate Court. ICASA wanted to make sure that the appellate court heard from victims and rape crisis centers and understood the amici's position that all victims, regardless of their conduct on the night of a rape or their connections to the rapist, deserve legal protection from their attackers. In addition, since this would be the first appellate decision interpreting the Civil No Contact Order Statute, it had a strong potential to affect many future victims.

During oral argument on the case, the lead appellate judge stated that the court would be sure to take into account the points in the amicus brief. Joyce and Rich eagerly await the appellate court's decision, which will surely impact how Civil No Contact Orders are treated in the future.

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