

### Sheppard Mullin Attorneys John Drdek and Steve Cardoza Receive the 2021 Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award

**Firm Recognizes an Associate and a Partner Who Demonstrated Significant Commitment to Pro Bono**  
12.30.2021

Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP is pleased to announce that it has awarded associate John Drdek and partner Steve Cardoza the Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award for their significant commitment to pro bono in 2021.

Drdek, a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve and active member of the firm's Pro Bono Committee, successfully launched Sheppard Mullin's Veterans Pro Bono initiative, establishing partnerships with Veterans Legal Institute (VLI); California Veterans Legal Task Force; and the University of San Diego School of Law's Veterans Legal Clinic. As a result of Drdek's efforts, more than 70 Sheppard Mullin attorneys have been trained or are currently working to assist veterans in need. Drdek also successfully handled the case of a Navy Corpsman, leading to his long overdue receipt of a Purple Heart for combat injuries suffered in Iraq, more than 16 years after his heroic actions. Drdek's efforts resulted in Sheppard Mullin being awarded VLI's Law Firm of the Year. Drdek earned his B.A., *magna cum laude*, from the University of Southern California and his J.D. from Stanford Law School, where he was awarded the *Judge Thelton E. Henderson Prize for Outstanding Performance* and *Pro Bono Distinction Award*. He is an associate in the Business Trial practice group in the firm's San Diego (Del Mar) office.

Commenting on receiving the Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award, Drdek said, "I am indebted to Sheppard Mullin for empowering its attorneys to support our nation's veterans. Our work would not have been possible without the overwhelming support of Dan Brown, Abby Carrigan, and Shannon Petersen—my office's managing partner and a fellow Navy veteran."

"John represents the best of our profession, using his legal skills to support his fellow veterans. He is a role model for all attorneys," said Dan Brown, the firm's Pro Bono Partner.

Cardoza is being recognized for his tremendous efforts to promote pro bono adoption work and secure adoptions for 17 children. Cardoza was the primary force behind an effort in Sheppard Mullin's Orange County office to encourage attorneys to take on pro bono adoption cases. To that end, Cardoza learned and then taught Orange County attorneys and law clerks the ins and outs of the adoption process in family law court. In addition, Cardoza personally oversaw 10 adoption cases this year, creating new families for 12 children. Even during COVID, Cardoza attended many in-person adoption hearings so that families could "have their day in court" and play a physical role in the legal processes that united children with new parents. Cardoza was also appointed to the board of directors of the Public Law Center (PLC) of Orange County, a natural progression for Cardoza and his commitment to the Orange County office's pro bono efforts. In this role, Cardoza frequently leads teams of Sheppard Mullin attorneys to volunteer at the PLC's bankruptcy reaffirmation clinic each summer, ensuring that summer associates know the emphasis Sheppard Mullin places on pro bono legal

services in Orange County. Cardoza, who received his B.S., *with honors*, from the University of California at Berkeley; his M.B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley; and his J.D. from Berkeley Law, is a partner in the Finance and Bankruptcy practice group specializing in commercial finance law in the firm's Orange County office. He has served on the firm's Executive Committee and as chair of the firm's Partner Compensation Committee.

Cardoza stated, "I am honored and humbled by this award. Bob Gerber's enthusiasm for pro bono service and his leadership of the firm's pro bono efforts were truly an inspiration. I am thankful for the opportunity to play a small role in continuing his legacy of service to the community. The Public Law Center is an outstanding organization, and I look forward to my continued association with the PLC in the years to come."

"In addition to holding multiple leadership positions in the firm over the years, Steve is truly a pro bono champion who deserves recognition for guiding so many families through the adoption process and his tremendous support of the firm's pro bono program in an unprecedented way this year," said Brown.

Sheppard Mullin's Bob Gerber Pro Bono Award is the firm's highest pro bono honor, recognizing and rewarding the important pro bono work done by Sheppard Mullin attorneys. The award is named in honor and memory of Bob Gerber, the founder of Sheppard Mullin's pro bono program and its leader for more than a decade.

## Attorneys

Daniel L. Brown

Steven Warren Cardoza

## Practice Areas

Bankruptcy and Restructuring

Commercial Lending and Financial Transactions

Litigation