



2014 IN REVIEW

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Friends and Colleagues:

We are pleased to share with you our Year in Review for 2014—another outstanding year for Mehri & Skalet and the clients we serve.

For more than twelve years, we have worked on behalf of those who face injustice across a wide spectrum of issues—securing victories on behalf of women, minorities, and those with disabilities, and protecting consumers from unsafe products. This year we continued that trend and expanded our work to help our clients keep their homes, receive the wages they are rightfully owed, and blow the whistle when fraud is perpetrated against the government.

We were also proud to add an outstanding new attorney to our staff: Danielle Davis, a former M&S Find Justice Fellow, rejoined the firm in 2014 as an Associate Attorney. Prior to returning to Mehri & Skalet, Ms. Davis served as a Senior Judicial Law Clerk to the Honorable Brian A. Jackson, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana and as a Law Clerk to the Honorable Karen Wells Roby, United States Magistrate Judge, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

In the year ahead, we look forward to continuing to grow and, working with you, making important impacts on the world around us. Here's to a great 2014!

Very truly yours,

Cyrus Mehri

Steve Skalet

NOTABLE RESULTS

Fair Housing and Lending

- *Plunkett et al. v. Donovan*, No. 1:14-cv-00326 (D.D.C.)
- *Bennett & Joseph v. Donovan*, No. 1:14-cv-01017 (D.D.C.)
- *Chandler v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., and Fannie Mae*, No. 11-3831 (N.D. Cal.)

In a series of cases, M&S has led the fight to protect reverse mortgage borrowers and their families. M&S is co-counsel with AARP Foundation Litigation for six surviving spouses of reverse mortgage borrowers, who allege that HUD failed to enforce the federal law that protects spouses of reverse mortgage borrowers from foreclosure and displacement, even if they are not named as borrowers on the loan. Congress enacted this protection so that losing one's spouse would not mean losing one's home as well. The federal district court issued a resounding ruling in plaintiffs' favor in September 2013.

As a result of our efforts, HUD has overhauled its program, and mortgages issued beginning in August 2014 will no longer treat the borrower's death as a due and payable event, allowing the spouse to continue living in the family home. HUD has consented to provide indefinite deferral of foreclosure on the plaintiffs, but have refused to provide this relief to other surviving spouses. M&S is continuing the fight to make HUD follow the law, and protect spouses as the law requires.

M&S also represents a California man who alleges that lender Wells Fargo has failed to give his mother's estate the right to sell her home, which was financed with a reverse mortgage, to her son and his family, at 95% of the property's appraised value. This "95% rule" is a key provision of the reverse mortgage program, which ensures that reverse mortgage borrowers can pass on their homes to family members, even if property values drop, as they have over the last 10 years. This is especially unjust and unnecessary because reverse mortgage borrowers pay substantial insurance premiums so that lenders like Wells Fargo will be fully compensated for any 95% sale.

Healthcare Justice

- *Missouri Navigator – St. Louis Effort for AIDS v. Huff*, No. 2:13-CV-4246 (W.D. Mo.)

The Affordable Care Act establishes two types of consumer assistance organizations, Navigators and Certified Application Counselors (CAC's), to educate people about health insurance and help them sign up for coverage under the ACA. Opponents of the ACA and insurance agents have lobbied state legislatures to prohibit Navigators and CAC's from engaging in certain activities—such as providing advice regarding the benefits of health plans, and talking to people about their insurance options off the Exchange—that the ACA requires them to engage in. More than a dozen states have enacted these statutes. On behalf of the St. Louis Effort for AIDS, Planned Parenthood and other groups, M&S challenged the Missouri statute imposing these restrictions, on both Supremacy Clause and First Amendment grounds. In January of 2014 the Federal District Court for the Western District of Missouri preliminarily enjoined the Missouri law. Many observers believed that the state would quickly settle the case, since the Governor, a Democrat, generally supports the ACA. Nevertheless, the state appealed the case to the Eighth Circuit. Mehri & Skalet argued the appeal on January 14, 2015, against both the state of Missouri and the Missouri Association of Insurance Agents, who filed briefs seeking to uphold the Missouri law. A decision is likely within 90 days. In the meantime, the Missouri statute has been enjoined during both the 2013-2014 open enrollment period and the 2014-2015 open enrollment period, as a result of which Navigators and CACs have been able to function in Missouri free of the restrictions the Missouri statute purports to impose on them.

Discrimination

- *Brown et al. v. Medicis Pharmaceutical Corporation*, No. 1:13-cv-01345 (D.D.C.)

We settled a class action gender discrimination case against Medicis Pharmaceutical Corporation, Inc. for \$7.15 million on behalf of over 200 women. A renewed motion for preliminary approval is currently pending in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

- *Walmart Pregnancy Discrimination*

M&S represents current and former Walmart workers who have experienced pregnancy discrimination and who claim that Walmart's pregnancy accommodation policies violate civil rights laws. Two charges of discrimination have been filed with

the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In March 2014, after the first charge was filed, Walmart announced changes to its written pregnancy accommodation policy – but the changes didn't go far enough. Unfortunately, pregnant women at Walmart continue to experience discrimination and to be pushed off the job. A second charge was filed with the EEOC in December 2014.

The National Women's Law Center and A Better Balance are co-counsel with M&S in this matter.

Workers' Rights

- *Martin et al. v. The United States of America*, No. 13-834C (Fed. Cl.)

In July 2014, Chief Judge Patricia Campbell-Smith of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims denied the United States Government's Motion to Dismiss in our case challenging its failure to pay essential non-exempt employees minimum wage and overtime compensation when due during the October 2013 government shutdown. In the decision denying the motion to dismiss, Chief Judge Campbell-Smith held that the government violated the FLSA by paying minimum and overtime wages even one pay period late. The case has since been conditionally certified as a collective action and notice is expected to be sent nearly one million federal employees affected by the case in the near future. The parties are currently engaged in discovery on the remaining issue of whether the government can meet its burden of establishing that it does not have to pay liquidated damages for this FLSA violation.

- *Wage and Hour Cases against the Bureau of Prisons*

Mehri & Skalet continued to pursue claims on behalf of federal employees against the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The cases involved violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Federal Back Pay Act, the Privacy Act, contractual violations, and overturning disciplinary decisions. In USP II Coleman, M&S obtained a landmark decision from the Federal Labor Relations Authority ("FLRA") upholding an arbitrator's decision that (1) employees should be paid for the time they are inside the secure confines of the institution (even if they have not performed any other compensable work) because they are required to be alert and vigilant and (2) the ten minute de minimis rule does not bar the recovery of overtime compensation for employees who have to relieve another officer during the shift exchange process. This path breaking decision has the capacity to change the pay requirements at every BOP institution. Since then, M&S also obtained victories ordering the Agency to pay employees for performing work before and after their shifts at FCI Jesup and at USP Atwater. In the latter case, the Arbitrator also ruled, similarly to the USP II Coleman decision, that the act of being alert and vigilant inside the secure confines of the institution starts the compensable workday.

In FCI Bennettsville, South Carolina, M&S recovered over \$9.25 million on behalf of approximately 150 employees as a result of the Agency's failure to compensate them for performing work before and after their shifts.

In a case at FCC Forrest City, M&S obtained a decision that the Agency violated the Privacy Act when it carelessly left documents with sensitive employee information unsecured in areas where inmates had access. As a result, the arbitrator determined that employees are entitled to the greater of \$1000 or the value of the harm they suffered as a result of the Privacy Act violation. Importantly, in addition to the out-of-pocket expenses employees incurred taking precautionary measures, the arbitrator determined that employees are entitled to compensation for the value of the time they spent taking precautions to protect themselves from the Privacy Act breach such as contacting their creditors, signing up for a credit protection service, or checking their credit reports.

In cases at FDC Miami, Florida and FCC Forrest City, Arkansas, M&S recovered well over \$1 million as a result of the Agency's failure to pay employees for performing work during their uncompensated meal periods. At FMC Rochester, M&S overturned the demotion of an employee resulting from the Agency's lack of just cause. The employee was awarded reinstatement with full benefits and back pay.

Consumer Protection

- *MagSafe Apple Power Adapter Litigation*, No. 09-1911 (N.D. Cal.)

Plaintiffs alleged that the first-generation "T" model of Apple's "MagSafe" adapter—the transformer and power cord that come with the laptop—was defectively designed and manufactured, causing the adapter to fray, spark, overheat, melt, or otherwise prematurely fail. The district court issued an order of final approval over the settlement. This settlement has already provided class members with millions of dollars in free, redesigned replacement adapters, and will provide cash reimbursements to class members who had to purchase replacement adapters, up to the full purchase price of the product, depending on how soon after purchase the original adapter failed or frayed.

- *Hensley-Maclean v. Safeway Inc.*, No. 11-01230 (N.D. Cal.)

M&S, along with the Center for Science in the Public Interest and other co-counsel, filed a class action lawsuit in February 2011 against Safeway for its failure to notify loyalty card holders about recalls of Class I dangerous or unsafe products. Products are classified as Class I when there is a reasonable probability that consuming the products will cause health problems or death.

Safeway collects phone numbers, email addresses and other contact information for customers who use their “Club Card” and the related “Just For U” program, but it does not have a policy of using that information to directly contact customers to inform them of dangerous product recalls, as other stores do. Plaintiffs seek an injunction requiring Safeway to use the information in its possession to notify customers of a recalled product and to furnish an automatic refund through the loyalty card.

In 2014, plaintiffs won a first of its kind ruling, which held that a retailer could be liable under California law for failure to give post-sale notice to customers of a Class I recall. This case stands for the proposition that retailers have a duty of care towards their customers, and are the only ones who can warn them that the products they have purchased are life-threatening or dangerous. Oral argument on plaintiffs’ motion for class certification is scheduled for June 2015.

New Matters

Sports Law

- *NFL Special Counsel on Social Responsibility*

In September 2014, the Commissioner of the National Football League (NFL) appointed Cyrus Mehri of Mehri & Skalet to serve as Special Counsel on Social Responsibility. In that role, along with Partner Ellen Eardley and Of Counsel N. Jeremi Duru, we canvassed over a dozen women’s rights organizations and anti-violence groups. M&S prepared an independent set of recommendations for the leadership of the NFL in a report called, “Forward Progress: Gender and the NFL.”

- *McAdoo v. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, No. 1:14-cv-935 (M.D.N.C.)

M&S filed a class action lawsuit against the University of North Carolina on behalf of UNC student-athletes who attended the university on athletic scholarships between 1993 and 2011. For two decades UNC recruited student-athletes with guarantees of a legitimate education. Once the student-athletes agreed to attend and enrolled, however, UNC systematically funneled them into bogus classes, depriving them of the education they were promised. In doing so, UNC has departed from the student-athlete principle and caused its student-athletes substantial injury, entitling them to unspecified damages and injunctive relief. The complaint is pending before the United States District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina.

Government Accountability

- *Grice v. The Social Security Administration*, No. 14-01082 (D. Md.)

M&S is co-counsel in a class action case against the Social Security Administration (SSA) alleging SSA illegally seized taxpayers' income tax refunds, without proper notice or due process, based on a claim that the taxpayers' parents received an overpayment of benefits decades ago when they were children. The SSA claims that the named plaintiff must repay this debt not because she personally received any overpayment, but because she is vicariously liable for an overpayment made to someone under her father's account. Egregiously, SSA sent notices to the mailing address of plaintiff's deceased parent, which was more than 50 years out of date, even though they knew the actual address of the taxpayer since she was receiving a tax refund. Not surprisingly, few if any family members of the proposed class are at these old addresses and many family member were now deceased. We believe that SSA's actions in this case are a gross violation of the classes' due process rights under the Constitution and in violation of law. The case seeks a declaratory judgment, institutional reforms and return of the tax refund payments wrongfully seized.

Discrimination

- *Robbins et al. v. Bolden*, EEOC No. 531-2014-00109X

M&S represents African American and Asian American employees in GS grades 13-15 in a proposed class action lawsuit against NASA alleging discrimination in performance appraisal ratings that result in lower compensation and lesser promotion opportunities for members of those two racial groups. The firm and co-counsel filed a motion for class certification in May 2014, on which the Administrative Judge has not yet ruled. The two proposed classes encompass over 2,000 employees.

Workers' Rights

- *Ahmed v. TJ Maxx Corp. et al.*, No. 10-cv-3609 (E.D.N.Y)
- *Roberts et al. v. The TJX Companies, Inc.*, No. 1:13-cv-13142 (D. Mass.)

In 2014, M&S joined a case and co-filed another case against the TJX Companies. M&S joined a case against TJ Maxx Corp. in which current and former assistant store managers claim they were denied overtime pay in violation of Federal and State wage and hour law. This case is pending a judgment on whether it can proceed as a collective action. M&S and co-counsel, Valli, Kane, and Vagnini, filed a parallel case against Marshalls and HomeGoods (also owned by TJX Companies) for their

denial of overtime pay to assistant store managers and trainee assistant store managers. This case is still in the discovery stage.

Healthcare Justice

- *Consumers Council of Missouri v. HHS*, No. 14-01682 (E.D. Mo.)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations require HHS to make public the data insurers file in support of the rate increases they seek, so that the public and independent experts can comment on those proposed increases and HHS or the state can consider those comments in determining whether proposed increases are unreasonable. However, HHS has never made any data purporting to support proposed rate increases public until after those increases have become final. In the summer of 2014, on behalf of the Consumers Council of Missouri, M&S filed an FOIA request seeking rate filing information for proposed increases for 2015. HHS did not respond to the request, and thus HHS filed suit under the FOIA seeking such information in late September of 2014. M&S moved for Summary Judgment and a decision is expected in the first half of 2015. Publicly releasing the data M&S seeks should enable consumers and independent experts, in appropriate cases, to demonstrate why proposed increases are too high, and thus should bring down some health insurance rates.

Fair Housing and Lending

- *National Fair Housing Alliance Inc. et al. v. Ryan Companies et al.*, No. 14-CV-3197 (N.D. Ill.)
- *Fair Housing Center of the Greater Palm Beaches Inc. v. Sonoma Bay Community Home Owners Association Inc. et al.*, No. 9:14-cv-80667 (S. D. Fla.)

In 2014, M&S continued its vigorous pursuit of fair housing cases. In conjunction with HOPE Fair Housing Center, the National Fair Housing Alliance, and Open Communities, M&S filed a case against Ryan Companies US, as well as additional builder, developer, managerial, and design parties, for accessibility violations under the Fair Housing Act. The lawsuit alleges that Defendants have continuously engaged in discriminatory practices against people with disabilities by designing and/or constructing senior apartment complexes in a manner that effectively denies people with disabilities full access to these facilities. Thus far, the parties have agreed to a joint expert to inspect the properties and the court has approved the informal discovery plan.

Additionally, in 2014 M&S filed a case against the Sonoma Bay Community Homeowners Association, as well as multiple housing organizations, for housing

discrimination on the basis of familial status in the rental of housing in violation of the Fair Housing Act. The Defendants currently maintain policies and/or practices that discriminate against families with children through the use of rental applications that require prospective tenants to submit report cards for persons under the age of 18 years old and rules that impose a curfew on persons under the age of 18, requiring them to be inside or on their patios after sundown. This case is in the discovery phase.

Qui Tam/False Claims Act

- *Rodwell v. Excelitas Technologies Corp*, No. 1:13-cv-10963 (D. Mass)

In July 2014, the Massachusetts District Court unsealed this action against Excelitas Technologies Corp., a leading manufacturer of thyratrons. Mehri & Skalet and co-counsel allege that Excelitas schemed to defraud the United States by manufacturing and concealing its production of defective and contractually-noncompliant thyratrons, which were used in military aircrafts and TSA x-ray scanners. Pending before the court is the Defendant's motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

Antitrust

- *Automotive Wire Harness Systems Antitrust Litigation*, No. 12-md-02311 (E.D. Mich.)

M&S represents a consumer who alleges that the manufacturers of "auto wire harnesses," the electrical systems of modern automobiles, fixed prices for their products, which caused automobile prices to be inflated. Several defendants in the case have already pleaded guilty to a criminal charge for participation in the conspiracy, and there have been partial settlements in the case.

- *Keurig Green Mountain Single-Serve Coffee Antitrust Litigation*, No. 1:14-md-02542 (S.D.N.Y.)

M&S filed this action to protect patients from illegal balance billing by HMO providers, i.e., charging HMO members for amounts beyond those provided in their plans—in violation of Maryland state law. In September 2013, the Court of Appeals of Maryland issued a pivotal decision, holding that a doctor's billings, as opposed to furnishing medical services, are not exempt from the Consumer Protection Act. As a result, when a healthcare provider's billing practices are unfair or deceptive, the provider may be subject to a private action brought pursuant the Consumer Protection Act. The case has been remanded to the Circuit Court for further proceedings consistent with the Court of Appeals' decision.

Homeowners' Rights

- *Deegan et al. v. Windermere Real Estate/Center Isle, Inc. et al.*, No. 14-2-00705-6 (Superior Court, Island County, WA)

In November, 2014, M&S and co-counsel filed a class action against certain real estate companies doing business in Whidbey Island, WA for failure to provide required noise disclosures to prospective purchasers of property located in the Airport Environs Mapped Impacted Areas established in Island County Code and depicted on the Airport Environs Map adopted by the Airport and Aircraft Operations Noise Disclosure Ordinance. Prospective buyers were entitled to this Notice so they could make informed decisions before buying their homes. The case asserts that in recent years increased activity at the Naval Air Stations, including very loud touch-and-go landings of EA-18G growler jets, has created extremely difficult living conditions, serious health hazards and loss of property values. The actions seeks both injunctive relief and damages.

Ongoing Matters

Sports Law

- *Fritz Pollard Alliance*

Twelve years after the release of Cyrus Mehri and Johnnie L. Cochran Jr.'s groundbreaking report, "Black Coaches in the National Football League: Superior Performance, Inferior Opportunities," M&S continues to promote the achievements of the Rooney Rule and the Fritz Pollard Alliance (FPA), an affinity group of NFL minority coaches, scouts, and front-office personnel.

Since 2003, the FPA has spearheaded the hiring of a record number of minority personnel in the NFL, including minority head coaches and general managers. The resulting diversity brought success to the teams that embraced it: Starting in 2007, eight out of the last 12 Super Bowl championship teams had either an African-American general manager or head coach. In 2013, the Baltimore Ravens, a team assembled by African-American General Manager Ozzie Newsome, won its second Super Bowl.

In November 2013, the FPA called upon NFL players to stop using the "N"-word after incident reports of its usage began increasing. The Fritz Pollard Alliance Executive Director, Harry Carson, and Chair John Wooten, released a statement to all former, current, and future NFL players, asking them to "respect the dignity of

your teammates, fellow players, officials, coaches, fans, and yourselves,” noting that, “If you tolerate the language being used casually now, at some point in the future, either as a current or former player, you may hear it directed at you.” Since the release of the article, awareness of the issue has increased and the topic has been debated by NFL players and personnel, ESPN, *The New York Times*, and CBS Sports, among others. In March 2014, the League adopted the FPA’s proposal and the use of abusive language in NFL games plummeted dramatically.

- *NFL Player Assessment Tests*

With the help of Dr. Harold Goldstein of Baruch College and Dr. Ken Yusko of Marymount University, founding partner of M&S Cyrus Mehri released an innovative new assessment tool that captures the non-physical attributes of a successful NFL player.

The new test, called the Player Assessment Test (PAT), measures approximately 20 characteristics of a successful football player, including “football smarts,” psychological strengths, motivational keys, and learning styles. Unveiled at the 2013 Scouting Combine in Indianapolis and taken by all athletes at the combine, the 50-minute test is designed to “dramatically level the playing field from a socio-economic point of view.” The new test is structured to augment rather than replace the Wonderlic (the assessment in use since the 1970s), and Mr. Mehri believes that the test will provide coaches and front-office personnel with more comprehensive evaluations of the players, allowing them to make the “best recruiting decisions.” The NFL PAT was used in the 2014 NFL Combine and by many teams to enhance player selection and coaching.

Discrimination

- *Norflet Progress Fund*

The Norflet Progress Fund is the *cy pres* fund named in honor of Ms. Merle Norflet, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit filed against John Hancock Life Insurance Company in 2004. M&S, along with co-counsel, represented a class of African Americans who were purchasers, owners, insurers, and beneficiaries of insurance policies issued by the John Hancock Life Insurance Company in the 1940s and 1950s. The plaintiffs alleged that for decades, John Hancock engaged in discriminatory practices in the sale and marketing of life insurance policies to African Americans. M&S and co-counsel secured a settlement in 2009 for \$24.4 million, a portion of which was distributed to class members. Approximately \$15 million was committed to the Norflet Progress Fund to be distributed to organizations that benefit African-American communities. In 2014, M&S continued its processing of millions of dollars

of Norflet Progress Fund grants to numerous nonprofit organizations to benefit African-American communities.

- *Individual Employment Settlements*

In 2014, M&S settled several cases involving race and gender discrimination in employment. M&S also negotiated a number of severance agreements for African-American and female executives as well as employees who faced retaliation for making or supporting a complaint of discrimination. M&S is also continuing to monitor employment discrimination settlements that require employers to make systemic changes to their policies and practices, in addition to the individual monetary relief for our clients.

Healthcare Justice

- *Scull v. Grover et al.*, No. 325698-V (Court of Special Appeals, MD)

M&S filed this action to protect patients from illegal balance billing by HMO providers, i.e., charging HMO members for amounts beyond those provided in their plans—in violation of Maryland state law. The Court of Appeals of Maryland issued a pivotal decision, holding that a doctor's billings, as opposed to furnishing medical services, are not exempt from the Consumer Protection Act. As a result, when a healthcare provider's billing practices are unfair or deceptive, the provider may be subject to a private action brought pursuant the Consumer Protection Act. The lower court granted the Defendant's motion to dismiss, holding that as a matter of law professional services were exempt from suit under the Consumer Protection Act. The Court of Specials affirmed the trial court. Maryland's highest Court of Appeals agreed to hear an appeal and issued a landmark decision in plaintiff's favor reversing the trial court and lower appellate court. The Court of Appeals held that unfair or deceptive billing practices by medical professional are subject to the Consumer Protection Act. This decision preserves consumers' right to file claims for redress of unfair business practices for the commercial non-medical aspects of a professional practice, such as fraudulent billing.

Consumer Protection

- *Enerson v. Verizon New Jersey Inc.*, No. L-344-13 (Superior Court, Bergen County, NJ)

In January 2013, M&S and co-counsel filed a consumer class action against Verizon New Jersey for its practice of routinely and deliberately charging customers for the installation of a network interface jack that is either not expressly requested or not actually installed. This practice violates a New Jersey Board of Public Utilities tariff,

which prohibits Verizon from charging customers under these circumstances. Defendant's motion to dismiss was denied and this case is now in discovery with a trial date scheduled in 2015.

Antitrust

- *Mackmin v. Visa Inc., et al.*, No. 1:11-cv-01831 (D.D.C.)

In October 2011, M&S and co-counsel filed a suit in federal court in the District of Columbia on behalf of a proposed nationwide class of ATM customers, who allege that Visa and MasterCard have effectuated an illegal price-fixing agreement, forbidding ATM operators from charging lower access fees for cash withdrawals processed over lower-priced ATM networks than they charge for transactions processed over Visa and MasterCard's higher-priced networks.

The result is that consumers pay more in ATM fees than they would in a free market. Agreements on price-setting are forbidden under federal and state antitrust laws.

The case is on appeal before the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, which heard argument in February 2015.

Fair Housing and Lending

- *National Fair Housing Alliance Inc. v. Bank of America Corp.* (HUD)

Representing the National Fair Housing Alliance and 16 fair housing centers across the nation, Mehri & Skalet filed an expanded HUD complaint on claims that Bank of America maintains and markets foreclosed homes in majority white neighborhoods significantly better than foreclosed homes in majority black and Latino neighborhoods.

The complaint was initially filed two year ago with NFHA and other organizations. This year, the amended complaint adds four new cities: Cleveland, OH, Kansas City, KA, New Orleans, LA, and Vallejo, CA. The complaint is pending before the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- *National Fair Housing Alliance v. Cornerstone Group Development Corp.*, No. 1:11-cv-21994 (S.D. Fla.)

M&S and co-counsel secured a settlement on behalf of the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) and West Palm Beach Coalition for Independent Living Options (CILO) in their federal housing discrimination lawsuit against Cornerstone Group Development Corporation, one of the largest multifamily housing developers in

Florida. The agreement settles claims by NFHA and CILO that Cornerstone Group practiced a pattern of discrimination against people with disabilities by designing and constructing multifamily dwellings and common areas without the accessibility features required under the Fair Housing Act. As part of the settlement, Cornerstone agreed to make modifications at over 58 developments to make apartments and common areas accessible, and to create and subsidize a Housing Accessibility Fund of more than \$200,000—managed by NFHA—to help Floridians with disabilities make their homes more accessible; pay \$1.35 million in damages, expenses, and attorneys' fees; and provide training on the Fair Housing Act's accessibility requirements for its executives and on-site construction managers. We are currently monitoring the modifications as projects are completed and NFHA is engaged in training and outreach in connection with using the Housing Accessibility Fund to increase fair housing opportunities in Florida.

FIRM NEWS: NEW FACES

We are so excited to welcome back Danielle E. Davis, who was an M&S Find Justice Fellow from September 2009 through July 2011. Ms. Davis rejoined the firm as an Associate Attorney at the end of 2014, after clerking for two federal judges.

Prior to returning to Mehri & Skalet, Ms. Davis served as a Senior Judicial Law Clerk to the Honorable Brian A. Jackson, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana and as a Law Clerk to the Honorable Karen Wells Roby, United States Magistrate Judge, and United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

Ms. Davis is a 2009 graduate of Howard University School of Law. Prior to graduating law school, she worked as a Legal Intern for Bernabei & Wachtel, PLLC and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Ms. Davis was also selected to participate in the Peggy Browning Fund Fellowship Program, one of the nation's most recognized fellowship programs for law students who are committed to workers' rights.

Ms. Davis' practice will focus on cases involving discrimination, civil and consumer rights violations, and Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA") violations. She is licensed to practice in the District of Columbia and Maryland.

FIRM NEWS: PRESS

Our cases make an impact not only for our clients, but for society as a whole. One way to reach the public is through the media. However you prefer to consume your news, you may have stumbled across an interview with one of Mehri & Skalet's attorneys this year. In 2014, Mehri & Skalet cases and attorneys were in the news more than 700 times reaching 1.9 billion potential viewers. Every story that hit the stands, airwaves, or the web reminded people that M&S is finding justice and achieving results for its clients.

Throughout the year, popular cable news shows like MSNBC's [Ronan Farrow](#) and [Melissa Harris-Perry](#) sought partner Jay Angoff's expertise on the Affordable Care Act during its next phase of implementation and increased attacks by its opponents. Jay alone was featured in more than 30 articles or interviews on the subject. As the former Insurance Commissioner of Missouri, Jay also received a flurry of coverage from the [Washington Post](#), [CNBC](#), [Associated Press](#), and [Politico](#) for specifically representing the Consumer Council of Missouri in demanding public disclosure of ACA health insurance rates in the state as required by the law. He stressed on [Fox and Friends](#) that to keep rates affordable, insurers must be held accountable.

Millions across the pond might have seen Cyrus Mehri on the [BBC](#) talking about bringing the Rooney Rule to the UK, a successful policy adopted in the US that requires increased diversity in professional sports coach and staff hiring. Likewise, you may have also read Jeremi Duru's wisdom on [BBC](#) and in other UK sports publications explaining the rule's benefits and impact. Perhaps you also heard Cyrus on [NPR](#) during your morning commute weighing in on an innovative tool developed to help companies increase diversity in their hiring processes.

If you are a proponent of corporate accountability and women's rights in the workplace, you may have read in [ThinkProgress](#) and [Jezebel](#) that Mehri & Skalet joined with other influential groups in demanding that Walmart end its discriminatory policies against pregnant workers. And if you were inside the Beltway, you might have heard Heidi Burakiewicz on [Federal News Radio](#) discussing our suit against the federal government for unlawful pay delays during the 2013 government shutdown. Other outlets including [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Hill](#), [Baltimore Sun](#), [Legal Times](#), to name a few, covered key developments in the case over the year.

The [Washington Post](#) highlighted attorney Craig Briskin and his continued fight to keep senior widows with reverse mortgages in their homes, while local papers across the country took note of M&S's concurrent work to keep housing providers accountable when they violate the Fair Housing Act. [WPTV](#) in southern Florida, the

[*Des Moines Register*](#) in Iowa, and the [*Chicago-Sun Times*](#) in Illinois covered the firm's work in their regions.

Shortly after news broke that the University of North Carolina had engaged in a longtime academic scandal allowing student athletes to take and pass fake classes, [CNN](#) broke the story about Mehri & Skalet representing a former UNC football player who sued the university for breaking its promise to deliver him a legitimate education.

Telling our clients' stories and of our work is critical to our mission to advance justice. You can always find links to our most recent press in the ["Press Room"](#) of our new and improved website, www.findjustice.com, and you can look to our ["Latest News"](#) alerts for summaries of current cases. Check out our Twitter feed, [@findjusticelaw](#), for quick updates on our progress, as well as our thoughts on the law, justice, and more.