

THE Legal Times AWARDS

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CHAMPIONS & VISIONARIES

This is the fourth year that we've recognized attorneys for work that has helped advance the practice of law in Washington. And as with our past efforts, the attorneys profiled here are heavy hitters whose influence often extends far beyond the Beltway.

Selections are made by the editors of *The National Law Journal*, based upon nominations from the legal community and our reporting and research. We divide our selections into two categories: Champions, those who have upheld the profession's core values through public service, pro bono efforts and advocacy for civil liberties, and Visionaries, attorneys whose business or legal acumen has expanded their firms, improved government or advanced the law.

— DAVID L. BROWN, EDITOR IN CHIEF



CHAMPIONS

These lawyers upheld the legal industry's professional mission of public duty. They took on community causes, fought to protect civil liberties and worked for ethics in government.

MICHAEL D. JONES

Kirkland & Ellis

Kirkland & Ellis partner Michael Jones graduated from Dillard University, a historically black college in New Orleans. So when the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law asked him to handle a \$2 billion lawsuit against the state of Maryland on behalf of its historically black colleges and universities, he couldn't resist.

The first-of-its-kind case, brought on behalf of students and alumni of four historically black institutions, asserts that Maryland failed to comply with a 2000 agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to provide adequate funding to the colleges and universities.

"I know that other institutions in other states are watching the case to see how it's going to be resolved," said Jones, who sits on the Lawyers' Committee's board. "It has large implications." A bench trial is scheduled for July 11.

Jones also represented 70 protesters who were arrested on the night of President Bush's inauguration in 2005 in Washington's Adams Morgan neighborhood. In February, Jones reached a settlement with the District of Columbia that expunged the



DIEGO M. RADZINSCHI

protesters' arrest records; each received about \$2,000 as part of a resolution of the claims that they were unlawfully arrested.

Most recently, Jones filed a defamation suit on behalf of Shirley Sherrod, the former Georgia director for rural development for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who was forced to resign after blogger Andrew Breitbart posted on his Web site an edited version of a speech she gave to a civil rights group that suggested she was discriminating against white farmers. Sherrod, an African-American, later was offered another position at the department. —AMANDA BRONSTAD