

## 5 Ways IP Attys Can Make The World Better This Year

Law360

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Erik Paul Belt

Here are some pro bono options for IP lawyers looking to do some good deeds this new year:

### Writing for Underrepresented Groups

Patent cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, IP legislation pending in Congress and proposed rule changes by regulatory agencies like the USPTO and U.S. Copyright Office can have far-reaching implications on a wide swath of IP stakeholders, making it important for decision makers to receive input from groups that may have a hard time getting their voices heard.

Lawyer organizations like the Boston Patent Law Association make it a priority to write amicus briefs for universities and other underrepresented groups in significant IP cases at the Supreme Court and the Federal Circuit to ensure that different viewpoints and perspectives are brought to light.

“The BPLA might align with law school professors, academics or other organizations to give the court deciding an important patent or trademark case a broader perspective of what a particular ruling might mean,” said Erik Belt, a McCarter & English LLP partner who is president of the association. “We try to get involved in as many cases as we can.”

IP lawyers also can play an active role in writing letters when Congress seeks to make changes to IP law or submitting comments when the USPTO plans to update the prosecution process or procedures before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board, he said.

“Don’t think you can’t make a difference; you can,” he said. “It’s really important that courts, Congress and the USPTO hear from us about why patents, trademarks and IP rights matter.”

### Remembering the Little Things

Busy IP attorneys should recognize that even a few hours of their time can go a long way toward educating the public about IP rights.

Belt said he has counseled the parent teacher organization at his children’s school on a voluntary basis when questions arise over copyright and trademark infringement issues and also has spent a couple hours giving free copyright advice to an artist seeking to create a large installation in a public park that planned to be a derivation of others’ artwork.

“Don’t think that in IP land, you necessarily have to spend 40 to 50 hours on pro bono work; sometimes an hour or two can actually make a difference,” he said. “Sometimes a small thing that takes you an hour or two can have bigger results in a positive way.”