



Lloyd O'Hara Public Interest Law Award

CAROLINE H. GENTRY



"Our rights are fragile and we have to be vigilant about protecting them. When we defend the rights of those living on the edge of society, we are also defending our own rights."

Caroline Gentry uses the practice of law to work for social justice, including protecting the rights of the poor, indigent, and the homeless. Caroline's legal career began before graduation from law school when she interned for the Legal Aid of Cincinnati. After graduation from Yale Law School in 1995, Caroline served as a law clerk for the Honorable Walter Rice, United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio through 1997. She then worked as a litigation associate with the Dayton, Ohio law firm of Faruki Ireland & Cox, P.L.L. before joining Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP in 2003. She is currently a litigation partner and chair of the Class Action Practice Group.

Caroline believes that being an attorney is a privilege that comes with a social contract to "ensure that everyone has access to justice." It is because of this belief that she was ready to help an individual who had served his country in Iraq, returned home and fell apart, becoming homeless and potentially losing his right to vote. "This client had lost everything in service of his country, and he was passionate about exercising his right to vote," she says. As a result she has spent countless pro bono hours representing the voting rights of homeless people in two significant cases.

Caroline served as lead counsel in *Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless v. Blackwell*, a pro bono case that helped to change and clarify Ohio's voter-identification requirements for the November 2006 general election and Ohio's provisional ballot rules for the November 2008 general election. The *NEOCH* case ended in a 2010 consent decree that ensures that voters who use the last four digits of their SSN as identification (rather than an ID with a current residential address) will have their provisional ballots counted, not discarded. She is currently litigating the enforcement of that decree in a 2010 election dispute, *Hunter v. Hamilton County Board of Elections*, that earlier this year led to a significant voting-rights decision, 635 F.3d 219 (6th Cir. 2011). Caroline's work on behalf of disadvantaged people who otherwise might be deprived of their voting rights exemplifies the spirit of Lloyd H. O'Hara who was a champion of the poor and disadvantaged.

A graduate of Yale Law School, Caroline received a B.A. in Political Science and Music from Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She is a member of the Dayton Bar Association; and the Ohio State Bar Association, a Fellow with the Ohio State Bar Foundation, and a member of the Defense Research Institute. She received an Ohio Super Lawyers Designation for Business Litigation in 2011 and an Ohio Super Lawyers Rising Star Designation for Business Litigation in 2005 through 2009. She was named Co-Barrister of the Month by the Dayton Bar Association in February 2010 (along with her husband, attorney Daniel J. Gentry) and received a "40 under 40" Award from the *Dayton Business Journal* in 2008.

Caroline is a dedicated community volunteer, serving on the boards of The Entrepreneurs Center, Asian Arts Center, and the Dayton Ballet. She was a member of the Leadership Dayton Class of 2006. She and her husband have two children and reside in Oakwood.



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