

KLS and Koch Pro Bono Lawyers Help Clear Path For Kansans To Work

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By *Sue Reisinger* · May 21, 2025

In-house counsel at Koch Inc. are helping hundreds of low-income residents every year get their driver's licenses reinstated or their criminal records expunged in Kansas, where Koch is based in Wichita, as well as across the U.S. where it has offices, to help restore their access to services and job opportunities.

matt ellis and joy springfield

"Kansas is a legal desert," Joy Springfield, head of pro bono at Kansas Legal Services, a non-profit legal aid organization partly funded by the Legal Services Corporation, told [Law360 - Pulse](#), "so we need all hands on deck to help our citizens in Kansas." Kansas Legal Services partners with Koch's pro bono program.

Springfield said Kansas Legal Services has 45 to 50 lawyers to cover the entire state. About 1,000,000 people visit the Kansas Legal Services website per year, and it receives about 30,000 calls a year for legal help on various civil issues, "and we can't help them all," she said.

And that's where Koch lawyers come in. Matt Ellis, Koch chief counsel for commercial and pro bono, said the Kansas Legal Services staff compiles lists and creates files on people seeking help to reinstate their driver's licenses or to expunge their criminal records.

Then, periodically, Koch sends a team of volunteer in-house lawyers to meet with those citizens and guide them through the process.

Jeff Ramsey, an executive vice president at Koch, said in a statement that, "restoring a driver's license isn't just about getting people back on the road - without a valid driver's license, people lose access to vital services such as job opportunities, health care, education, housing and banking."

Likewise, Ellis and Springfield explained, expunging a criminal record is often a crucial first step to obtaining a job or even a license to seek a job as a nurse, cosmetologist, barber or pilot, for example.

Springfield said a one-day expungement clinic in Wichita earlier this year handled 149 cases. When people's records are expunged, it has economic impact for them and their communities, she added.

Ellis said he first started working with Kansas Legal Services in 2017, when Koch began formally organizing a pro bono initiative among its in-house counsel.

"We realized the first thing we needed to do," Ellis said, "was change the [state] rules to allow in-house attorneys to provide pro bono legal services. So Kansas Legal Services was a partner in helping to get that rule changed. We've worked with them every year since."

Ellis said he has volunteered every year at a clinic and taken on cases, working "one-on-one with someone who really just needs a guide to help them through the process."

He said Kansas Legal Services publicizes the events and screens clients, as well as prepares the case files for the volunteer lawyers.

"And the thank you notes that we get from our clients have been very rewarding, ranging from people who are able to now get a new job or qualify for a promotion or go back to school," Ellis added.

The pro bono initiative has about 100 lawyer volunteers across the country, he said. It aligns with Koch's vision and values of trying to remove barriers so that more people can achieve their potential, he said, and in doing so, they also improve their communities.

Koch is the second-largest private company in the U.S., with more than 120,000 employees and operations in over 50 countries.

"The need [for legal help] is great," Ellis noted. "I think many in-house lawyers do not realize the superpower they have, of just being an attorney, even though they work in-house on corporate matters. Just the fact that they are an attorney, they can use that knowledge and skill set to really make a difference for someone who is stuck and doesn't know how to move forward. And Kansas Legal Services provides great training that allows people like me, and other in-house attorneys, the opportunity to jump in and help in a meaningful way."

Others apparently agree. Nathan Jiwanlal, chief counsel for transactional services at Koch, wrote on LinkedIn that his pro bono work was a "transformational experience."

"I am fortunate that Koch empowers its legal professionals to utilize their skills and talents to make a difference in their communities," Jiwanlal wrote. "If you have any hesitation about taking on a pro bono project, take the leap. You won't regret it."

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