

Ronald J. Tabak

Skadden

Special Counsel, New York

Pro Bono



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Education

J.D., Harvard University, 1974

B.A., Yale University, 1971
(*magna cum laude*; Phi Beta Kappa)

Bar Admissions

New York; U.S. Supreme Court; U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Second, Fifth and Eleventh Circuits; and U.S. District Courts for the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York

Experience

Law Clerk, Hon. John F. Dooling, Jr., U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York (1974-1975)

Ronald J. Tabak coordinates the *pro bono* practice at Skadden worldwide. Under his oversight, each year over 1,000 attorneys at the firm handle *pro bono* cases suitable to their practices and interests. Mr. Tabak established a special *pro bono* program in which most of the firm's summer associates actively participate and frequently involves the firm's legal assistants in *pro bono* matters. He also is a member of the advisory committee for the Skadden Fellowship Program.

Mr. Tabak is experienced in death penalty and civil rights litigation. For example, he successfully argued *Francis v. Franklin*, a death penalty case, in the U.S. Supreme Court and played a leading role in securing Johnny Gates' removal from death row after 26 years. Mr. Tabak has chaired the Committee on Civil Rights of the New York City Bar Association and co-chaired the New York State Bar Special Committee on Re-Entry, and is chair of the Death Penalty Committee of the American Bar Association's Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice. He has been a leader in the ABA's efforts to recruit and train lawyers for indigent death row inmates. He spearheaded the successful effort to get the ABA to call for a moratorium on executions until various due process concerns are resolved. He chaired the ABA Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice's Task Force on Mental Disability and the Death Penalty, whose proposals have been adopted as policies by the ABA, the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association.

He has spoken on a range of topics, including *pro bono*, fellowships, capital punishment, *habeas corpus* and civil rights, at numerous law schools, bar associations and civic groups, as well as on radio and TV. He has written numerous articles on such subjects and, beginning in 2007, has authored the Capital Punishment chapter in the ABA Criminal Justice Section's book, *The State of Criminal Justice*. In 2017, Mr. Tabak organized and moderated an ABA/ New York City Bar Association panel discussion on the experiences of the seven states that had already abolished capital punishment in recent years and the implications for states that still have the death penalty. In August 2018, he organized and moderated an ABA program featuring Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago concerning whether capital punishment, as now implemented, comports with evolving standards of decency.

In addition, Mr. Tabak is experienced in energy, contract, antitrust, securities and entertainment litigation. He has been a principal litigator in complex litigation concerning the syndication of television programming. Mr. Tabak has worked with attorneys from the firm's Los Angeles office to secure favorable rulings in arbitration, court proceedings and administrative proceedings concerning the operations of North America's largest-producing oil and gas field. In addition, he was a member of a team that successfully represented respondents in an arbitration concerning gas for Hong Kong.

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Mr. Tabak is the recipient of many honors and awards, including:

- American Bar Association Death Penalty Representation Project: Special Recognition Award, in honor of extraordinary leadership and contributions to the work and mission of the project (2019);
- Latino Justice PRLDEF's Ronald J. Tabak Community Champion Award (renamed in Mr. Tabak's honor) (2018);
- Martina Correia Courage Award, Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (2018);
- Norman Redlich Capital Defense Distinguished Service Award (2015);
- American Bar Association Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice's Robert F. Drinan Award for Distinguished Service (2014);
- Legal Aid Society Awards (2009, 2005, 1998, 1997 and 1984);
- National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty: Outstanding Legal Service Award (2006);
- MFY Legal Services 2005 Scales of Justice Award;
- New York State Bar Association President's Pro Bono Service Award (2005 and 1985);
- The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Champions For Social Justice And Equality Award from The Black Law Students Association of Rutgers School of Law (2003);
- New York Criminal Bar Association Award (2001);
- a special award from the Southern Center for Human Rights (1997);
- New York State Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' Thurgood Marshall Award (1996);
- Fortune Society's Helen Bittenweiser Award (1996);
- an award of the Criminal Justice Section, New York State Bar Association for Outstanding Contribution to the Delivery of Defense Services (1990); and
- an award from *The American Lawyer* for "Best Pro Bono Performance" (1986).

Associations

- American Bar Association (ABA) Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice, Member, Policy Council (1994-2000), Special Counsel, Policy Council (2001-08), Chair or Co-Chair, Death Penalty Committee (1988-Present), Chair, Task Force on Mental Disability and The Death Penalty (2003-08);
- ABA Death Penalty Representation Project, Member or Special Advisor, Steering Committee (several terms starting 2003-Present);
- ABA Death Penalty Due Process Review Project, Member or Special Advisor to Steering Committee (2001-Present);
- New York City Bar Association (NYCBA) Committee on Civil Rights, Chair (1998-2001) and Member (1994-97), NYCBA Nominating Committee, Member (2006-07), NYCBA Special Committee on Capital Punishment, Member (1994-Present), Member, NYCBA Committee on Pro Bono and Legal Services (two three-year terms before 2000);
- New York State Bar Association (NYSBA), Co-Chair, Special Committee on Re-Entry (2013-16), NYSBA Legal Services Committee Member (2006-19), NYSBA President's Committee on Access to Justice, Member (2006-Present);
- New York Civil Liberties Union, Board Member (1995-Present), Executive Committee (2004-Present) and Secretary (2007-Present);
- LatinoJustice PRLDEF, Board Member (2004-Present), Secretary (2006-10) and Litigation Support Committee Chair (2011-Present);
- Death Penalty Information Center, Board Member (2004-Present);
- New York Lawyers Against the Death Penalty, President (1988-2013);
- New Yorkers for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, Board Member (1995-2014), Secretary (2004-14);
- Jethro Committee to Honor the Legal Profession, Central Synagogue, Chair (2002-05; 2008-14);
- Lawyers Alliance for New York, Board Member (1988-91);
- Appleseed, Board Member (1995-2002; 2003-09);
- Charity Corps (a joint project of the NY Attorney General's office and the NY State Bar Association), Leadership Committee Member (2011-13)

Publications

“Capital Punishment,” and similar chapters since 2007, *The State of Criminal Justice 2019* (2019)

“The Continuing Role of Race in Capital Punishment Notwithstanding President Obama’s Election,” *37 N. Ky. L. Rev.* 243 (2010)

“The Private Bar’s Efforts to Secure Proper Representation for Those Facing Execution,” *29 Justice System Journal* 356 (2008)

“Executing People With Mental Disabilities: How We Can Mitigate An Aggravating Situation,” *XXV Saint Louis U. Public L. Rev.* 283 (2006)

“Overview of Task Force Proposal on Mental Disability and the Death Penalty,” *Catholic University Law Review* (2005)

“Capital Punishment in the United States of America — Moratorium Efforts & Other Key Developments,” *Capital Punishment: Strategies for Abolition* (Cambridge U. Press, 2004)

“Why an Independent Appointing Authority Is Necessary to Choose Counsel for Indigent People in Capital Punishment Cases,” *Hofstra Law Review* (2003)

“Striving to Eliminate Unjust Executions: Why the ABA’s Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section Has Issued Protocols on Unfair Implementation of Capital Punishment,” *Ohio State Law Journal* (2002)

“Finality Without Fairness: Why We Are Moving Towards Moratoria on Executions, and the Potential Abolition of Capital Punishment,” *Connecticut Law Review* (2001)

“How Empirical Studies Can Affect Positively the Politics of the Death Penalty,” *Cornell Law Review* (1998)

“*Habeas Corpus* As a Crucial Protection of Constitutional Rights: A Tribute Which May Also Be a Eulogy,” *Seton Hall Law Review* (1996)

“Integration of Pro Bono Into Law Firm Practice,” *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* (1996)

“Judicial Activism and Legislative ‘Reform’ of Federal *Habeas Corpus*: A Critical Analysis of Recent Developments and Current Proposals,” *Albany Law Review* (1991)

“Is Racism Irrelevant? Or Should the Fairness in Death Sentencing Act Be Enacted to Substantially Diminish Racial Discrimination in Capital Sentencing?” *N.Y.U. Review of Law & Social Change* (1990-1991)

Principal Co-Author, “The Execution of Injustice: A Cost and Lack-of-Benefit Analysis of the Death Penalty,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* (1989)