

NEWS & INSIGHTS

LIGHTFOOT'S LANE MORRISON RECOGNIZED BY THE BIRMINGHAM BAR'S VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM FOR PRO BONO CASE

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The Birmingham Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Program (BBVLP) recently recognized Lightfoot, Franklin & White LLC associate A. Lane Morrison's pro bono work in resolving a landlord-tenant dispute that saw a damages claim reduced from more than \$14,000 to just \$964. The BBVLP **highlighted Morrison and the case** as an "Attorney Spotlight" item in the August 25 issue of the organization's "E-Brief."

"We are very proud of Lane for his work on this pro bono case," said Lightfoot managing partner Wynn M. Shuford. "At Lightfoot, we encourage all of our lawyers to give back to the community, and pro bono service is a meaningful way to do that. It is wonderful to see one of our own making such a significant contribution."

Morrison was given the case through the BBVLP. He represented tenants who, after renting a house in April 2016, found that it had major issues with leaks, cracked walls and rats. After repeated requests of their landlord to take action were ignored, the couple stopped paying rent. The landlord took them to court, seeking more than \$14,000 in damages. The couple filed a counterclaim seeking compensation for the money they had spent out of their own pockets for repairs as well as belongings ruined by the rats. They then went to the BBVLP seeking help.

The BBVLP agreed to take on the case and assigned it to Morrison. At trial, he first persuaded the district court that it did not have jurisdiction to decide a matter with damages exceeding \$10,000. The plaintiff subsequently dropped the \$14,000 claim to that threshold amount. Morrison then used the tenants' thorough documentation — which included numerous photographs of the damage caused by rats — to argue they were clearly entitled to enough damages from the landlord to make up for most or all of the withheld rent. The judge agreed, awarding the landlord \$4,736 and the tenants \$3,772. Ultimately, the tenants only left owed \$964 to the landlord.

"Even though I handle many other cases with higher amounts at risk for clients, this one will always stick in my memory because of how we were able to balance the scales for this couple," said Morrison. "I was so pleased things turned out in such a positive way."

Morrison focuses his practice on defending clients in complex commercial and product liability disputes. With a background in engineering, he is particularly adept at handling cases involving highly technical issues. Before joining Lightfoot, Lane put his training and experience to work defending architects and engineers in design and construction defect claims across the Southeast.

About the Birmingham Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Program

The Birmingham Bar Volunteer Lawyers Program (BBVLP) was created in 1994 by leaders in the Birmingham Bar Association to promote access to justice by inspiring volunteer attorneys to provide high-quality representation at no charge to low-income families with basic civil legal needs at critical times in their lives. For more information, visit <http://vlpbirmingham.org/>.