BLB&G Founding Partner Max Berger's $2 Million Challenge Grant Anchors Over $6 Million in Commitments to New Federal Bar Foundation Civic Education Fund Across the Second Circuit

The Federal Bar Foundation successfully meets the fundraising challenge; BLB&G joins the Fund's founding supporters

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BLB&G founding partner Max W. Berger and his wife, Dale Berger, through the Dale and Max Berger Family Foundation, have pledged a $2 million matching commitment to anchor the Federal Bar Foundation Civic Education Fund, a dedicated endowment that will substantially expand support for civic education for schoolchildren and teachers across the Second Circuit, which includes New York, Connecticut, and Vermont. The Federal Bar Foundation, the charitable affiliate of the Federal Bar Council, announced today that the Fund has already obtained commitments of more than $6 million from leading law firms and lawyers within the Federal Bar community, and the campaign will continue until the Federal Bar Council's Law Day event on May 1, 2027. The news was shared at the Federal Bar Council's annual Thanksgiving Luncheon at Cipriani 42nd Street. The Fund will be administered under the umbrella of the Federal Bar Foundation.

A Legacy of Integrity, Service and Giving Back

"Our democracy depends on each generation understanding the principles and institutions that sustain it," said Max W. Berger, founding partner of BLB&G. "Dale and I believe that teaching young people about the Constitution, the role of the courts, and the responsibility of citizenship is one of the most important investments we can make in our country's future. We are deeply grateful to the Federal Bar Council, the Federal Bar Foundation, and the many members of the legal community who so quickly and generously answered this challenge. The response has been remarkable, and together we have made civics education a permanent priority."

For Berger, whose education at Baruch College and scholarship to Columbia Law School helped shape his path to the law, giving back means creating opportunities for others to serve. In 2021, the Dale and Max Berger Family Foundation committed $3.3 million to Columbia Law School's Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program, including $3 million for its endowment and $300,000 for program support.

Since co-founding BLB&G in 1983, Berger has helped build a firm defined by its commitment to service and a culture grounded in integrity, collaboration, respect and giving back to the community. His legacy extends beyond litigation results to the lawyers he has mentored and the educational opportunities he has helped create. The civics education endowment carries that commitment forward: investing in the knowledge young people need to understand their rights, their courts and their responsibilities as citizens.

BLB&G Joins the Fund's Founding Supporters

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In addition to the Bergers' gift, BLB&G is making a significant donation to the Fund, joining a group of founding supporters from across the legal community. The commitment builds on the firm's longstanding investment in education and public service, including the Bernstein Litowitz Berger & Grossmann Public Interest Law Fellowship and the Paul M. Bernstein Memorial Scholarship at Columbia Law School, which was established in 1990 to support second-year students demonstrating academic excellence and community involvement. Together with the Bergers' educational philanthropy, these initiatives reflect a shared conviction that professional success carries a responsibility to expand opportunity and serve the public good.

"Max's commitment to this initiative exemplifies the belief that has guided our firm since its founding: that the practice of law carries with it a responsibility to serve the public good," said John Rizio-Hamilton, BLB&G partner, member of the firm's Executive Committee and Secretary of the Federal Bar Foundation. "The Federal Bar Foundation's work in civics education helps young people understand not only how our government and legal institutions function, but why they matter. We are proud to join Max and Dale in supporting this important effort and to stand alongside our colleagues in the legal community to help ensure these programs continue to educate and inspire future generations."

Building a Lasting Foundation for Civic Understanding

The Fund is intended to sustain and expand civic education by building on The Honorable Robert A. Katzmann Justice For All: Courts and the Community Initiative. Launched in 2014 by then-Chief Judge Katzmann, the Second Circuit initiative brings courts and communities closer together through courthouse visits, classroom programs, mock trials and educational resources. Its work helps students understand the Constitution and the role of an independent judiciary, while equipping teachers to bring those lessons into their classrooms. The Fund will also support the development of additional civic education programming.

The Federal Bar Council and Federal Bar Foundation have been important partners in this mission through the Council's classroom outreach and after-school law programs and the Foundation's support of teacher education.

A permanent endowment will make that work more sustainable and less dependent on annual fundraising, helping preserve Judge Katzmann's civics education legacy for future generations. The Bergers also hope the endowment will serve as a funding model that other federal circuits can adopt, extending the program's impact beyond the Second Circuit.

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