

VOL. 1 ISSUE 2 · AUGUST 2023

# PRO BONO INSIGHTS

A Monthly Georgia Legal Services Program Newsletter

## Message from the Director

August is “National Make-a-Will Month.”

Creating a Last Will and Testament is not just about assets, such as a home. Wills preserve lives and protect families. In honor of “National Make-a-Will Month”, I’d like to tell you more about why Wills are such a hallmark of the GLSP Pro Bono Unit.

GLSP has always concerned itself with families, their safety and their income security. A Will helps protect families. For example, parents can name a guardian for their children in the event of the parent’s untimely death and unmarried same-sex couples can safeguard their wishes for assets to be transferred to their partner. Powers of Attorney, which can further advance the goals of a Will, appoint others to make health care, financial, and other decisions in the event that an individual becomes ill or otherwise incapacitated. Having these documents in place helps ensure your wishes will be followed without requiring a guardianship/conservatorship court proceeding.

Writing a Will is not always a straightforward process, and some households are particularly susceptible to unexpected challenges. Individuals with disabilities or special needs who receive government benefits, such as Social Security or medical assistance, may no longer qualify for these benefits if they inherit property, money, or other assets. In these cases, a supplemental needs trust may be appropriate to accept and distribute these assets without jeopardizing the beneficiary's eligibility for government programs. Receiving legal assistance through the process of creating a Will and related documents can help identify issues like this.

According to some sources, only 22% of Americans earning less than \$40,000 have a Will—the least among all income groups. These individuals and families are no less likely to face tough decisions in the event of a loved one’s passing. This month, we encourage you to talk about Wills and Powers of Attorney, sign up to help draft a Will for a GLSP client, or assist us in a Wills-related clinic. Sign up at [https://bit.ly/Pro\\_Bono\\_Sign-Up](https://bit.ly/Pro_Bono_Sign-Up)



Mike Monahan  
Director of the Pro Bono Unit

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# 2023 GLSP PRO BONO CONFERENCE AND AWARDS



## THE CONFERENCE

UGA SCHOOL OF LAW

OCT 11 - 13

GLSP invites its partners and peers to learn more about access to justice in rural and small city Georgia. This year's event highlights constructive collaboration opportunities with law students and law schools. Sessions will include speakers from GLSP, the Judicial Council of the Georgia Supreme Court, Self-Represented Litigants Network, Georgia-based law schools, the State Bar, and more.

Attendance is free, but pre-registration is required.

For more information or registration questions, contact Heidi Behnke ([hbehnke@glsp.org](mailto:hbehnke@glsp.org))

## GLSP PRO BONO AWARDS

LOCATION TBD (ATHENS, GA)

DATE: OCTOBER 11, 2023

TIME: 6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

Join GLSP for an awards reception celebrating some of our standout volunteers and partners who contribute to our mission of providing access to justice and opportunities out of poverty across the state. This year's inaugural event will recognize the winners of the following awards:

- Pro Bono Champion Award: The volunteer who handled the greatest number of GLSP pro bono cases last year.
- Pro Bono Advocate Award: A volunteer who successfully wove pro bono into the fabric of their law practice
- Pro Bono Servant Award: Recognizing a long-time attorney volunteer of GLSP.
- Pro Bono Catalyst Award: A person or entity who, in partnership with GLSP, supports pro bono success in their community.
- Pro Bono Wise Counsel Award: A GLSP in-house attorney volunteer.
- Powerhouse Law Student Award: A law student or recent graduate who has excelled in providing service through GLSP.

For more information or to register, contact Heidi Behnke ([hbehnke@glsp.org](mailto:hbehnke@glsp.org))





## CLE and Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are encouraged to access and explore our substantive training materials through our Pro Bono Learning Management System ([Learning.GLSP.org](https://Learning.GLSP.org)). Additionally, GLSP and our partners host a variety of free or at-cost CLE sessions throughout the year.

To learn more about our training program, volunteer to host/present a training, or recommend new topics, please contact Mike Monahan ([mmonahan@glsp.org](mailto:mmonahan@glsp.org)).

## DIRECT REPRESENTATION

GLSP's Pro Bono Unit offers a wide array of in-person and remote direct service opportunities throughout the state of Georgia. These opportunities are a great way for attorneys licensed in Georgia to assist clients one-on-one with legal matters ranging from appearing in court, drafting documents, or obtaining access to new resources. Opportunities exist statewide in the following substantive areas:

- Wills and Powers of Attorney
- Restriction of Criminal Records
- Bankruptcy
- Protective Orders for Victims of Violence
- Name Changes
- Probate of Estates
- and more

Paladin, our new volunteer platform, lists some of our existing opportunities. You can access it by going to [https://bit.ly/GLSP\\_Paladin](https://bit.ly/GLSP_Paladin)

To learn more about region-specific opportunities, contact one of our Pro Bono Coordinators or Staff Attorneys (see page 10 of this newsletter) or contact Mike Monahan ([mmonahan@glsp.org](mailto:mmonahan@glsp.org)).

## CLE Training Events

### Disability Rights Related to FEMA Assistance

Date: August 22  
Time: 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EST  
Location: Online (Zoom)  
CLE Pending: 1 hr. general

Training covers the FEMA appeals process with a special focus on the rights of disaster survivors with disabilities.

Register at: <https://bit.ly/45aQjnY>

For more information, contact Mike Monahan ([mmonahan@glsp.org](mailto:mmonahan@glsp.org))

### Pro Bono Roadshow: Federal Court Power Act

Date: August 30  
Time: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Location: Richard B. Russell Federal Building and United States Courthouse  
CLE Pending: 1 hr. professionalism

Explore the application of the Lawyer's Creed and the Aspirational Statement on Professionalism to domestic violence and pro bono settings.

RSVP by emailing: [CLERSVP@grand.uscourts.gov](mailto:CLERSVP@grand.uscourts.gov)

For more information, contact Mike Monahan ([mmonahan@glsp.org](mailto:mmonahan@glsp.org))

### Pro Bono Roadshow: Record Restriction Panel

Date: September 27  
More information coming soon.

# UPCOMING PRO BONO CLINICS

Clinics may be advice-only or brief services. Some clinics will be cover a variety of civil legal issues and provide clients time to meet with a private attorney for advice on their issue. Other clinics will focus on a specific legal issue, such as wills or record restriction, and will require the attorney to draft documents prior to meeting the client at the clinic. You can participate on-site or virtually.

Check out our upcoming legal clinics around the state and find one that meets your volunteer interests. Remember, for many clinics you can join us in-person or participate remotely.



## Gainesville Probate Clinic

Looking for 1 volunteer to provide up to 4 clients with counsel and advice on probate/estate matters. Contact Maria Fuentes (mfuentes@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



## Douglas County Wills Clinic

Looking for 10 volunteers to draft and execute wills for 1-2 clients each. Contact Ashley Clark (aclark@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



## Moultrie Record Restriction Clinic

Looking for volunteers to assist clients in reviewing their criminal records and complete requests for restriction of applicable items. Contact Sarah Anderson (sjanderson@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



## Gainesville Probate Clinic

Looking for 1 volunteer to provide up to 4 clients with counsel and advice on probate/estate matters. Contact Maria Fuentes (mfuentes@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.



## Whitfield County Record Restriction Clinic

Looking for volunteers to assist clients in reviewing their criminal records and complete requests for restriction of applicable items. Contact Sarah Anderson (sjanderson@glsp.org) to sign up or for more information.

## COMING SOON...

October TBD  
Augusta  
Estate Planning Clinic for  
Survivors of Violence

October 18  
Gainesville  
Probate Clinic

November 1  
Floyd County  
Wills Clinic

November 15  
Gainesville  
Probate Clinic

Not able to volunteer right now, or want to increase your impact? A gift to GLSP helps support our staff and provide access to justice and opportunities out of poverty throughout the state!

[bit.ly/Justice\\_2023](https://bit.ly/Justice_2023)

# AUGUST'S PRO BONO STARS

Join with us to applaud August's Pro Bono Stars - A Volunteer Lawyer, a Law Student, and a Pro Bono Partner



## STAR VOLUNTEER LAWYER

### KIM H. STROUP



**"I VOLUNTEER AT GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES TO GIVE BACK AND PAY IT FORWARD."**

A mission-driven substantive expert, Kim H. Stroup greatly enhances GLSP's ability to serve clients. She is a graduate of the Mercer University School of Law and was raised in Dexter, Georgia before settling down in Macon. Her sense of purpose and dedication to using her knowledge to support access to justice and opportunities out of poverty make her a clear star volunteer!

Kim specializes in estate planning, probate, and real estate with James Bates Brannan Groover LLP, and frequently accepts pro bono cases that help clients protect and secure their homes.

"My typical GLSP clients worked their entire lives to buy a home," explained Kim, "and I want to help them ensure the homeplace passes in accordance with their wishes."

Kim's expertise also makes her a great partner for GLSP staff in the Macon Regional Office, who contact her for advice on their most complex probate cases. Speaking to Kim's care and compassion for her pro bono clients, Rachael Schell, GLSP's Pro Bono Staff Attorney in Macon, said "Kim treats her pro bono clients with the same level and respect and kindness as her paying clients. She touches everyone she helps!"

Kim's drive to give back arose from adversity. In 2013, while in the midst of a 4-month recovery from an automobile accident, Kim met many fellow patients at the Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital in Atlanta who had suffered catastrophic injury. Not all of them had access to the types of resources and level of support from friends and family that she did. When she returned to work, Kim committed herself to volunteering to help people in need in her local community.

We applaud Kim Stroup for her dedication to helping those in need and for sharing her knowledge and skills with GLSP!

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## STAR LAW STUDENT



### AIMEE RISHER

Aimee Risher is a rising second-year law student at Georgia State University College of Law (GSU) who has been interning with GLSP's Pro Bono Unit during her summer break. Aimee first came to GLSP through the 2023 Rural Access to Justice alternative spring break trip.

Aimee has been a critical member of the team and has taken on several projects this summer, including a Probate Clinic and Community Education presentation, a training on Disaster Legal Services for our partners at The Coca-Cola Company, and assisting in the development of our law student programming for the upcoming school year. Aimee is also putting her Student Practice Act Certificate to good use and working with a GLSP client on a complex probate appeal.

During the school year, Aimee works as a clerk for an intellectual property law firm, assisting with trademark protection and brand enforcement strategies. Aimee also participates in a number of extracurricular activities including the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's National Patent and Drafting Competition, the Environmental Law Society, and the Intellectual Property Law Society. Prior to law school, Aimee worked for Georgia-Pacific in several different positions focused on environmental compliance.

Aimee has been an asset to the Pro Bono Unit, and we look forward to seeing what's next for her!

**"MY SUMMER INTERNSHIP WITH GLSP HAS BEEN A UNIQUE AND INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE. MY WORK COVERED A WIDE RANGE OF LEGAL TOPICS, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY IT GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO HONE CRITICAL SKILLS NOT OFTEN TAUGHT IN THE CLASSROOM--LEGAL RESEARCH, DRAFTING PLEADINGS, CLIENT INTERACTIONS, AND COURTROOM PROCEDURE. GREAT MENTORSHIP AND NETWORKING HAVE ALSO ENSURED THAT GLSP AND PRO BONO WORK WILL BE PART OF MY FUTURE CAREER AS A LAWYER."**

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## STAR VOLUNTEER PARTNER

### CHERYL NAJA



This month's Pro Bono Star Partner is Cheryl Naja, the Director of Pro Bono and Community Engagement for Alston & Bird LLP. From day one, Cheryl has been deeply invested in connecting resources to people in need. She was among the first to approach GLSP about an improved statewide collaborative structure for disaster-related legal needs and is a founding member of our disaster legal services coalition, Georgia Team Ready. She also advocates on behalf of GLSP to other Atlanta-based firms and corporate legal departments. Throughout her career, Cheryl has embodied and modeled GLSP's mission of providing access to justice and opportunities out of poverty throughout the state of Georgia.

Cheryl has also supported GLSP's Wills and Estates Pro Bono Signature Project, which utilizes volunteer attorneys to develop Wills and Powers of Attorney for clients in virtual, remote, and hybrid settings. "Knowing that GLSP goes into some of the most rural places in our state to ensure that low-income homeowners are preserving generational wealth is helping the next generation. What a gift for families."

Cheryl's dedication to GLSP stems from her upbringing in Middle Georgia and her knowledge of how different access to resources can be in rural parts of the state. According to her, "Programs such as the Farmworker Rights Division and Disaster Legal Assistance are just a few of many examples of projects that illustrate GLSP's responsiveness to the legal needs of the people in Georgia. Through innovation, expertise, and responsiveness the GLSP team stands ready to support the legal needs of the underserved. Because of them, we are reminded that our state is so fortunate to have Georgia Legal Services Program."

Cheryl has been an active member of the State Bar of Georgia's Access to Justice Committee, the Atlanta Pro Bono Roundtable, the Atlanta Immigration Working Group, Advisory Board of the GA PATENTS Program, United Way of Great Atlanta's Public Policy and Advocacy Committee, Global Corporate Leadership Board of United Way Worldwide, and is Co-Chair of the Law Firm Anti-Racism Alliance Housing and Homeownership Working Group.

After 38 years in the legal field (25 with Alston & Bird), Naja is retiring at the end of August. GLSP is grateful for Cheryl's partnership and support throughout her storied career and we know her passion for bettering Georgia will never "retire."

**"HAVING GROWN UP IN MIDDLE GEORGIA, IT MAKES ME REALLY PROUD TO KNOW THAT PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL QUALIFYING GEORGIANS THROUGHOUT THE STATE THANKS TO GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM."**

France has harnessed the sun's heat to produce energy. France is also well supplied with the "light metals"—such as aluminum, magnesium, and titanium—that are so important in the world's economy today, especially in the transportation industries. Aluminum ore, or bauxite, was named after the town in southern France where it was first discovered in the 19th century.



## For the Public Good

by Mike Monahan, Director of the Pro Bono Unit

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Pro bono means free, right? I hear that all the time. I'm sure you do, too. Those two words have become a catch-all for free services or a good deed from carpenters, electricians, tax preparers and other trades.

A service that is just free or a one-off gift is an act of kindness or a hook for future business. That's not so objectionable. But thinking about pro bono publico services only- or mainly- in terms of its no or low-cost nature rather than its potential for goodness strips the service of its greatest meaning.

We as lawyers do work that can bring profound and lasting change in the lives of the people we serve. We don't perform "free" services, we perform services for the good of the public that happen to be free or low cost. We shortchange ourselves when we focus on the cost rather than the benefit. Here's how.

In working for the public good, a lawyer develops a singular habit for choosing what's right over what's easy, of what's permanent over what is fleeting. Some might see it in terms of work/life balance, others simply as answering a call they just can't ignore.

Pro bono publico service is a learning experience. You may not be familiar with the area of law, but you learn it. You may not be familiar with the client's culture or community, and you learn about it. You may not have seen how the client's case would affect you personally, and then you discover something about yourself. Pro bono publico service is an integral part of discovering who you are as a lawyer and professional. What price do you put on that work?

Many lawyers take on pro bono publico work because they have a clear vision of a change they would like to see in the world. The case allows them to address a wrong, fix a systemic, stubborn problem or highlight a needed change in the community.

Seeing your case work as free vs. billable is a shortcut that leads nowhere. Your pro bono publico work should be a matter of pride, a body of work that sets you apart from other lawyers- service that defines you and brings you satisfaction. Put some thought to how you engage in pro bono service and build it into your business plan each year.

The public sees pro bono as an expectation. We do, after all, claim pro bono publico as our professional responsibility. Your response to client expectation is your plan- when you say yes and when you say no. A crafted approach helps you manage your business. Think about sending a final bill to your pro bono client with the total amount you would have billed and zeroed out. You both need to see the bottom line. The client's expectation of pro bono to which you responded "yes" should also be met with a complete description of how you met the expectation.

Put some meaning and feeling back into your pro bono. You're not going to accept a fee because it just doesn't feel right in this case with this client. We all know it's not free. Fight the good fight, pay it forward, go where you haven't gone before. You get more than you give in pro bono publico service.



## Intern Sees GLSP's Impact on Day One

by Mia McKnight,  
Law Student Intern with the  
Savannah Regional Office



This article originally appeared in  
Volume 22 Issue 52 of the Savannah Bar Association "Citation"

I will always remember my first day in court. It was the Monday of spring break and my first day volunteering at Georgia Legal Services Program in Savannah. Upon arriving at the office, I learned I would be attending court with my supervising attorney, Harris R. Mason. The hearing was for retroactive first-offender status, which I had never heard of before. When I met the client, I discovered a misdemeanor charge from almost two decades ago was preventing her from attaining jobs she was qualified for and needed to support her children. I saw tears in her eyes as she explained to the judge how her record has limited her employment opportunities and her family's standard of living.

She pursued higher education to improve her life, but her criminal record was holding her back. I thought about the thousands of other Georgians in similar situations, which emphasized the importance of legal aid work in record restrictions and other areas I had not yet explored. As I continued volunteering that week, I learned that criminal records could adversely affect housing, welfare, adoptions, immigration, professional licensure, property rights, and mobility. The collateral consequences of having a criminal record are not stated at one's sentencing, but they are real, even decades after people have completed their sentences.

My time at Georgia Legal Services Program convinced me to return in the summer as a General Practice Intern and continue to engage in record restriction work at the Georgia Justice Project in Atlanta this fall. As a rising second-year student at the University of Georgia School of Law, I am appreciative of being able to interact with clients, attend court, and work on projects in a variety of civil practice areas I know will leave a positive impact on peoples' lives.

The experienced and zealous advocates at Georgia Legal Services Program inspire me. Despite limited time and resources, they give it their all every day to help as many people as possible. The clients who contact Georgia Legal Services have nowhere else to turn because they cannot afford to hire an attorney. While I applied to law school knowing that public service would be a part of my career, my time at Georgia Legal Services has solidified that desire because I witness peoples' great need for legal help with problems like keeping Social Security benefits, eviction defense, and protecting themselves from abusers. While I will celebrate when anytime a GLSP attorney helps a client achieve a positive result, the sobering fact that so many other people without the means to hire an attorney need legal support remains. A lack of financial resources should not exclude people from quality legal service. They need it most.



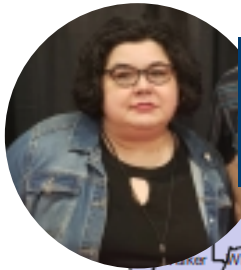
McKnight with former GLSP Staff Attorney Harris R. Mason

# MEET THE TEAM - REGIONAL OFFICES

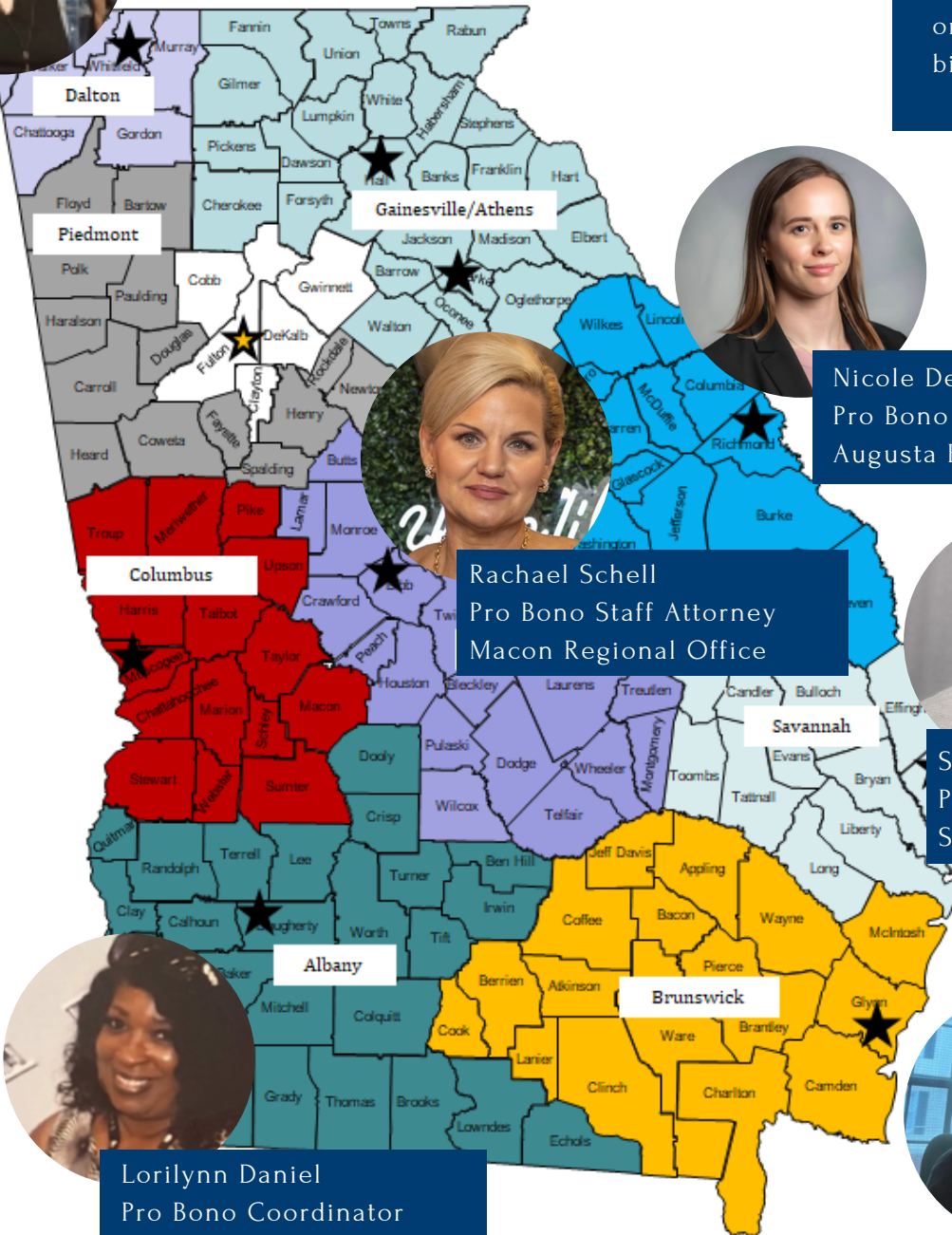
## WE'RE HIRING!

GLSP's Pro Bono Unit is seeking Pro Bono Staff Attorneys for our Piedmont and Columbus Offices.

To learn more, contact Mike Monahan (mmonahan@glsp.org) or view our job postings at [bit.ly/GLSP\\_Jobs](https://bit.ly/GLSP_Jobs)



Angelina Vaquera-Linke  
Pro Bono Coordinator  
Dalton Regional Office



Nicole DeLoach  
Pro Bono Staff Attorney  
Augusta Regional Office



Rachael Schell  
Pro Bono Staff Attorney  
Macon Regional Office



Sarah J. Anderson  
Pro Bono Supervising Attorney  
Savannah Regional Office



Lorilynn Daniel  
Pro Bono Coordinator  
Albany Regional Office



Marika LaRoy  
Pro Bono Coordinator  
Brunswick Regional Office

# MEET THE TEAM- CENTRAL SUPPORT



Mike Monahan  
Director of the Pro Bono Unit



Alexandra V. Eichenbaum  
Deputy Director of the Pro Bono Unit



Ashley Clark  
Pro Bono Supervising Attorney



Nobie Mitchell  
Pro Bono Coordinator



Deborah Chapman  
Pro Bono Support Manager



Tommy Richards  
Pro Bono Coordinator

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To learn more, contact Mike Monahan ([mmonahan@glsp.org](mailto:mmonahan@glsp.org)) or view our job postings at [bit.ly/GLSP\\_Jobs](https://bit.ly/GLSP_Jobs)