

THE STATE BAR OF ARIZONA PUBLIC LAWYERS SECTION  
is seeking nominations for the following awards:

2026 Distinguished Public Lawyer Award

2026 John Belatti Public Lawyer Career Achievement Award

2026 Justice Michael D. Ryan Award for Judicial Excellence

2026 Rising Star Award

2026 Grant Woods Service to Law & Community Award

*Please note: Nominations are due Monday, **August 3, 2026***

**PURPOSE.**

The purpose of these awards is to recognize outstanding public lawyers and judges who have made extraordinary and exemplary contributions to the state and the justice system. These awards will be presented at the Annual State Bar Convention.

**NOMINATION CRITERIA.**

***DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC LAWYER AWARD***: This award is intended to recognize the work and dedication of outstanding public attorneys. A public attorney is a licensed attorney who: (1) works for a government agency (federal, state or local) or nonprofit legal aid office; or (2) provides legal services to a government agency or agencies where legal services provided amount to at least 50% of the attorney's legal practice. Nominees must have at least five (5) years of experience as a public attorney and exhibit a dedication and commitment to public service and the public practice of law. Nominees may also distinguish themselves by making significant contributions that aid in the operation of government or by demonstrating extraordinary leadership, initiative, or innovation in the performance of their duties. Elected public officials are not eligible for this award.

***JOHN BELATTI PUBLIC LAWYER CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD***: This award is intended to recognize retired or retiring public attorneys who have had distinguished careers as public attorneys, have made many significant contributions to public service and are recognized as models of the dedication and commitment of public attorneys. All retired or retiring public attorneys are eligible to receive this award, including elected public officials. A public attorney is a licensed attorney who: (1) works for a government agency (federal, state or local) or nonprofit legal aid office; or (2) provides legal services to a government agency or agencies where the legal services provided amount to at least 50% of the attorney's legal practice.

***JUSTICE MICHAEL D. RYAN AWARD FOR JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE AWARD***: The Public Lawyers Section seeks to honor a judicial officer who demonstrates a dedication and commitment to improving the justice system. Nominees should have high ideals, personal character and judicial competence. Nominees may be distinguished by: (1) participation in projects focused on improving the quality of justice or the justice system; (2) demonstrating innovation in the performance of their duties; and/or (3) demonstrating an ability to effectively handle complex or unusual trials or appeals. All federal, state and local judicial officers (including judges, commissioners, magistrates, hearing officers and justices of the peace) who have at least five years of judicial experience are eligible.

***RISING STAR AWARD***: This award is designed to recognize a Rising Star attorney who (1) is a current public attorney (2) with a maximum of five years public lawyer experience and (3) who has demonstrated a passion for representing the public, an outstanding work ethic, and exceptional legal talent. A public attorney is a licensed attorney who: (1) works for a government agency (federal, state or local) or nonprofit legal aid office; or (2) provides legal services to a government agency or agencies where legal services provided amount to at least 50% of their legal practice. This award could be given to a Rising Star for one specific case or for a series of outstanding accomplishments which demonstrate the attorney is a Rising Star. Nominees may also distinguish themselves by making significant contributions that aid in the operation of government or by demonstrating extraordinary leadership, initiative, or innovation. Elected public officials are not eligible for this award.

***GRANT WOODS SERVICE TO LAW & COMMUNITY AWARD:*** In addition to their demanding jobs in the public service, many selfless public lawyers serve their communities in various ways. Many also serve unofficial and unremunerated roles as mentors to colleagues and younger lawyers. This award recognizes a public lawyer who carries on Grant's legacy of exceptional community service, service to the legal community, and mentorship. This special recognition will be given to a public lawyer who embodies the ideals for which Grant will always be remembered.

**SELECTION PROCEDURE.**

Nomination forms for these awards are attached. Additional forms are available by contacting Sarah Schneider at the State Bar office, [Sarah.Schneider@staff.azbar.org](mailto:Sarah.Schneider@staff.azbar.org). **All nominations must be submitted by Monday, August 3, 2026.** The Public Lawyers Section Executive Council will select the recipients for each award based upon the criteria described above. Questions regarding these awards should be directed to Sarah Schneider.