



Each year the National Consumer Law Center honors the accomplishments of an exceptional consumer attorney who, through the practice of consumer law, has contributed significantly to the well being of vulnerable consumers.

Paul Bland is an exceptional leader and strategist in the fight to preserve access to justice; a skilled litigator with a number of extraordinary victories on behalf of consumers; and a mentor to many, helping us all to do better as we work to promote marketplace justice.

NCLC is most proud to honor F. Paul Bland, Jr. with the 2006 Vern Countryman Award.

“As a fierce litigator on behalf of low-income consumers, a passionate leader of the consumer advocacy community, and a devoted mentor to newer public interest lawyers, Paul is unmatched.” Michael J. Quirk, Leslie A. Bailey, Richard Frankel, Kate Gordon

F. Paul Bland, Jr.

2006 Recipient

Vern Countryman Award

We share with you just a few of the many good words his colleagues have to say about Paul.

“Paul is one of the finest lawyers and individuals I have ever had the pleasure of meeting and working with. He is the real thing. A great brief writer, an extraordinary legal mind and simply one of the best oral advocates I have had the opportunity to observe.

“But perhaps more significant than these talents are the results. He has coordinated the national coalition of consumer and civil rights groups opposing mandatory arbitration. He has traveled the country continuously achieving huge victories for consumers. He has coordinated listserves and has selflessly assisted lawyers from all over the country in their efforts to protect consumers.

“Paul is one of my heroes...” Cliff Palefsky

“Paul has a singular track record when it comes to this issue [binding mandatory arbitration] and is renowned nationally not only for his exceptional abilities as an attorney in trial and appellate courts, but as an architect for challenging these clauses and for his computer-like retention of case names and citations on arbitration.

“...Paul’s accomplishments transcend the area of arbitration clauses. He is a leading advocate when it comes to various other issues including federal preemption, class action abuse, class action preservation, payday lending, predatory lending, credit card issues and many others as well.” James C. Sturdevant

“By spearheading the fight against enforcement of abusive BMA [binding mandatory arbitration] clauses and creating a litigation model for consumer lawyers to use in waging this fight, Paul has done at least as much as any consumer lawyer in the country to keep the courthouse doors open to consumers over the past decade. By successfully challenging BMA clauses that ban class actions and beating back sweeping federal preemption arguments, Paul has enabled consumers to continue holding major companies accountable under the law. And by stepping forward to challenge class action abuses when they arise, Paul has worked to ensure that the class action device will continue to be available as a tool for holding companies accountable to consumers and the public.” Michael J. Quirk, Leslie A. Bailey, Richard Frankel, Kate Gordon

“...Fighting what is clearly an uphill battle, Paul has had a remarkable number of victories and, as important, has himself been the architect of the majority of successful strategies in the area [of binding mandatory arbitration clauses].” Kieron F. Quinn

“Paul Bland is an unequivocal wonder: an immensely bright, tenacious and eclectic attorney. Like so many others in our field, I spent the last decade inspired by his teaching, leadership and example.

Awards
Luncheon
12 noon
Sunday,
November 12

**Former
Countryman
Recipients**

Irv Ackelsberg
Gail Hillebrand
Dan Hedges
Joanne Faulkner
Lynn Drysdale
Richard Rubin
Kathleen Keest
Alan Alop
David Ramp
Elizabeth Imholz
Jim Sturdevant
Pat Sturdevant
Mike Ferry
Bill Brennan
Carolyn Carter
Margot Saunders
Henry Sommer

"...In every instance of our collaboration, I found him to raise the level of competence and dedication of everyone involved.

"...Paul Bland is an utter phenomenon. It is inconceivable to me that you could have a more valuable, self-possessed, strikingly articulate, broadly learned or intellectually capable advocate nominated for this award." Janet R. Varnell

"The best of us keep our eyes on the prize. Love of airline food is not the reason Paul scampers around the country talking to advocates, building their capacity and their confidence. Love of late nights at the office is not why Paul spends more hours helping a less experienced lawyer write a brief than he would have spent writing it himself. Love of management is not why Paul constantly attends to the development of organizations that can fight the fight over the long haul. It's love of winning, coupled with a general's appreciation of strategy and tactics.

The best of us know that there is no limit to the good we can do if we let someone else take the credit. I can, but will not, identify numerous cases that have been won because of Paul's ideas and Paul's words, and, with Paul's blessing, without a mention of Paul's name. It's a mark of generosity and a tribute to his devotion to the cause." John Vail

"He has truly extraordinary legal acumen. He also is extraordinarily productive. I think that, in these respects, he is the sharpest of all the consumer advocate attorneys I have known. He thinks, practices, and advocates on the highest legal plane, the level at which judges constantly think about setting policy and running the country, and not merely about applying the law to particular cases. That is rarefied air. It is the air in which tremendous amounts of damage has been done to the cause of justice for consumers (almost invisibly to the public), but it is also the air in which good can be done and damage can at least be limited. Mr. Bland is extraordinarily effective in that realm." Bernard E. Brown

"Simply put, Paul has been the national leader of the struggle against mandatory binding arbitration clauses. Paul has waged this fight in state and federal courts throughout the country and has done so with considerable energy and unfailing dedication. He has pursued litigation, challenging arbitration clauses with ingenuity, tenacity and remarkable skill. Perhaps more importantly, Paul has achieved a series of noteworthy victories in his challenges to arbitration clauses ranging from *Ting v ATT* to *Discovery Bank v Superior Court*.

In my view, Paul has both waged and led one of the most, if not the most, important consumer law struggles of our times...It is not an exaggeration to say that without Paul's leadership and abilities the resistance to binding mandatory arbitration clauses might have failed years ago." Mark A. Chavez

[about Paul's legendary mentoring] "...the night before my appellate argument in the *Gutierrez v Autowest* case, about 4:00 pm Pacific Time (7:00 Eastern) I had a moment of doubt...I tracked down his cell phone number and, after my effusive apologies to which he replied, "It's fine, I'm not busy," I began...He listened without interruption, patiently answered my questions, assured me I was prepared and would do just fine. At the first lull in conversation, I heard a colossal bang in the background on his end....'Everything okay?' [Barron asked]. 'Well,' he calmly replied, 'We're having something like a hurricane here, the lights are out, I'd just better go see if my daughter is okay...' Hurricane Isabel was pummeling Maryland as we spoke and never did Paul say, 'I've got problems of my own.' My oral argument went well, the East Coast eventually dried out, we got a great decision for consumers, and Paul Bland went on to mentor the next lawyer in need." Nancy Barron

"Paul's combination of intellect and passion in the pursuit of consumer justice is unparalleled among our ranks." Richard J. Rubin