

LAWYERS ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK

INDIVIDUAL HONOREES



JONATHAN BLOOM and **JESSICA FALK**, *Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP*
Effective Legal Advocacy Enhances Public Access to Government Information about Nonprofits

Jonathan Bloom is counsel in the Intellectual Property/Media Group of Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP. He received a B.A. from Princeton University in 1984, an M.A. from Yale University in 1987, and a J.D. from New York University School of Law in 1991.

Jessica Falk is a senior associate in Weil's Complex Commercial Litigation and Intellectual Property & Media practice groups. She received a B.A. from Boston University in 2006 and a J.D. from Boston University School of Law in 2009.



Mr. Bloom and Ms. Falk represented **Lawyers Alliance for New York** in two successful cases appealing New York government agencies' failure to provide documents in response to Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests. The first involved a 2011 Lawyers Alliance request seeking information regarding compensation for nonprofit executives collected by the Governor's Task Force on Not-for-Profit Entities (Task Force). When the Task Force claimed that most of the information was exempt from disclosure, Mr. Bloom and Ms. Falk represented Lawyers Alliance in an Article 78 proceeding that settled when the Task Force agreed to provide aggregate information. Lawyers Alliance's Deputy Executive Director Elizabeth Guggenheimer reports, "This information helped us better understand changes in the State's approach to regulating nonprofit expenses and advise our clients appropriately."

Mr. Bloom and Ms. Falk represented Lawyers Alliance in 2015 regarding a request for information about why and how often the New York City Finance Department refused to grant real property tax exemptions to charitable organizations. These exemptions help nonprofits own office space to provide onsite services and build capital so they can better serve New Yorkers. After ignoring the FOIL request for a year, the Finance Department produced the documents within a month of the appeal's filing. Lawyers Alliance learned that the Department denied several organizations on questionable grounds, including that their mission involves economic development or helping low-income people secure housing. Lawyers Alliance Executive Director Sean Delany says, "This information has been enormously helpful as we counsel clients seeking an exemption. We have shared it with other nonprofit law practitioners through the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee's Government Relations Committee, benefiting a large cross section of the nonprofit sector."

Says Mr. Bloom, "Working with Lawyers Alliance on Freedom of Information Law matters has given me a chance to help further the organization's mission through advocacy directed to the vitally important matter of public access to government information – including information relating to a legislative initiative affecting Lawyers Alliance clients."

Ms. Falk says, "Lawyers Alliance's efforts to enhance governmental transparency provide much needed insight for their nonprofit clients. I am proud to have worked with the talented Lawyers Alliance team to procure vital records on property tax exemptions and nonprofit executive compensation."