

**2007 Annual Dinner Meeting  
of the  
Rhode Island Affiliate,  
American Civil Liberties Union  
November 1, 2007**

**Honoring the Raymond J. Pettine  
Civil Libertarians of the Year:**

**ACLU Volunteer Attorneys**

**Amy R. Tabor**

**&**

**Thomas W. Lyons III**

**The Raymond J. Pettine  
Civil Libertarians Of The Year  
*Amy R. Tabor and Thomas W. Lyons III***

At first glance, the two attorneys being honored this year for their volunteer work for the Rhode Island ACLU could not seem more different. Amy Tabor is a seasoned activist who served as advisory legal counsel to the Plowshares peace protesters in the 1980s and is state contact for the National Lawyers Guild. Extremely active in the R.I. Bar Association, Tom Lyons specializes in products liability and toxic tort defense, business litigation and personal injury defense work. What ties them together, however, is a deep respect for the role of law and the importance of defending civil liberties for all. Together, they epitomize the strength of the ACLU's well-regarded legal program and its very successful track record and, more broadly, the crucial role that dedicated lawyers play in volunteering their time and expertise to help those in need of legal assistance.



AMY R. TABOR received her J.D. degree from Northeastern University School of Law, and has been with the law firm of Hardy, Tabor and Chudacoff since 1992. She has been an Assistant Professor in the Labor and Industrial Relations Research Center, School of Graduate Studies at URI since 1983, and has lectured widely on special education law and employment law. She is also the author of numerous articles and papers on topics ranging from disabilities law to whistleblower rights. She received a special ACLU Cooperating Attorney Award in 1990.

Since becoming an ACLU cooperating attorney in 1976, she has handled cases covering a wide range of civil liberties issues. Among her many victories for the Affiliate are: *Exeter-West Greenwich School District v. Pontarelli*, challenging a state ruling that a public school district pay tuition for students attending parochial schools; *In re Stephen Perry*, overturning an order that barred employees in an OSHA safety violations case from discussing the court proceedings in public; *Mellen v. R.I. Lottery Commission*, a suit on behalf of an unendorsed political candidate, striking down a state law allowing only political party committees to hold raffles to raise funds for political campaigns; and *State of Rhode Island v. Bilodeau*, overturning a policy that required custodial parents to reimburse the state for AFDC benefits they had legally received years earlier.

Amy has not been afraid to take on the powerful in litigating for the Affiliate. In *National Association of Social Workers, R.I. Chapter v. Harwood*, she sued the Speaker of the House to challenge a legislative rule that barred private, but not government, lobbyists from the House floor; and in *Edwards v. Clarke*, she took on the entire R.I. Supreme Court

on behalf of an attorney who was summarily fined for filing a brief containing “contemptuous” and “demeaning” language. And despite her political leanings, she has never hesitated to defend, as an ACLU attorney, the rights of people on the “other” side, including seven Republicans who were fired from their jobs at Newport Jai Alai because of their political affiliation; and the R.I. State Right to Life Committee in an appeal supporting the privacy rights of a woman who gave up her child for adoption.



THOMAS W. LYONS III is a graduate of Case Western University Law School, and a partner at the Providence law firm of Strauss Factor Laing & Lyons, where he has practiced since 1995. He was editor-in-chief of the Rhode Island Bar Journal from 1998 to 2002, and has also served on the Bar Association’s executive committee since 1998. He just completed serving a term as the Bar Association’s President.

Tom has been a volunteer attorney for the Affiliate since 1990, when he wrote an important “friend of the court” brief for the ACLU in a closely-watched Access to Public Records Act lawsuit. Since then, he has volunteered in more than a half-dozen other cases, including, in particular, a trio of major class-action lawsuits on behalf of the poor, all of which he litigated to favorable conclusions: *Malave v. Ferguson*, which challenged woefully inadequate notices sent out by the state to welfare recipients facing a significant reduction in benefits; *Davis v. Woonsocket Housing Authority*, a federal lawsuit challenging a housing authority’s issuance of “no trespass” orders against two fathers who, despite the mothers’ consent, had been barred from visiting their children living in a public housing complex; and *Doeg v. Ferguson*, a due process challenge to troubling Department of Human Services’ procedures, including the use of questionable handwriting analysis evidence, in conducting food stamp fraud hearings.

He is presently representing the ACLU in an open records lawsuit against the R.I. State Police, seeking access to a cruiser camera videotape of a controversial traffic stop and copies of the agency’s traffic enforcement policies and procedures.

Because they help exemplify both the best of the legal profession’s aspirations for *pro bono* service and, more particularly, the Affiliate’s ability to tackle a broad range of civil liberties issues with astonishing success in often less-than-hospitable courts, the RI ACLU is extremely pleased to present Amy and Tom with the Raymond J. Pettine Civil Libertarian of the Year Award.