

## Season Two Wrap-Up

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### Season Two Wrap-...

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### In This Podcast Episode

WilmerHale's podcast, *In the Public Interest*, gives listeners an inside look at the legal and policy challenges capturing the public interest. In season two, Partners John Walsh and Felicia Ellsworth invited notable figures and top leaders in their fields to discuss topics ranging from COVID-19 to reproductive rights and more.

As season two comes to a close, join Walsh and Ellsworth as they share their thoughts on episode highlights and reminisce about memorable moments from this season. In this wrap-up episode, Walsh and Ellsworth reflect on their roles as podcast hosts and chat about what they're looking forward to in season three.

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## *Season Two Episodes*

### *Leaders in Law: Rachel Brand*

WilmerHale's podcast, *In the Public Interest*, welcomes Partner Alyssa DaCunha, who speaks with Walmart's Executive Vice President of Global Governance, Chief Legal Officer and Corporate Secretary Rachel Brand.

### *Reproductive Rights at a Crossroads*

In this episode, *In the Public Interest* welcomes Partner Kim Parker, who speaks with Helene Krasnoff, the vice president of Public Policy Litigation & Law at Planned Parenthood, and Dr. Amna Dermish from Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas.

### *Environmental Defender Romina Picolotti on Climate Justice and Human Rights*

*In the Public Interest* welcomes renowned environmental activist and former Argentine Secretary of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Romina Picolotti, who speaks with WilmerHale Senior Associate Kelsey Quigley and Counsel Jessica Lutkenhaus.

### *Supporting Our Veterans*

In honor of those who serve our country, WilmerHale's *In the Public Interest* podcast is proud to highlight our nation's veterans and the work being done by the National Veterans Legal Services Program.

### *Where Do We Stand on COVID-19? A Conversation with Andy Slavitt*

In this episode, co-host and Partner Felicia Ellsworth is joined by fellow Partner Thomas Strickland to discuss the current landscape of COVID-19 with one of the nation's leading

authorities on the pandemic, Andy Slavitt.

### *All About Web3: The Regulatory Outlook for Cryptocurrency*

In this episode of *In the Public Interest*, co-host and Partner John Walsh is joined by fellow Partners Tiffany Smith and Zachary Goldman to explore the world of Web3 with Jai Ramaswamy.

### *Shoulder by Shoulder*

In this episode, co-host and Partner John Walsh is joined by Senior Associate Alexandra Stanley to hear from Mr. Ahmed, an Afghan refugee who fled Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover.

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## ***Episode Transcript***

### *Transcript*

**John Walsh:** Welcome to *In the Public Interest*, a podcast from WilmerHale. I'm John Walsh.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** And I'm Felicia Ellsworth. John and I are partners at WilmerHale, an international law firm that works at the intersection of government, technology and business.

**John Walsh:** As we bring our second season of the *In the Public Interest* podcast to a close, it's been just a tremendous, interesting year again. To talk to so many fascinating people has just been a blast. Felicia, your thoughts on this season?

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Well, what a fun ride it's been. I've really enjoyed my first season as a co-host on the podcast and working with John and the team, and really looking forward to kind of reminiscing over what a busy and interesting set of episodes we've had this past year.

**John Walsh:** So, we started out this year, this season, with a profile episode in which our partner, Alyssa DaCunha, was joined by Rachel Brand, Walmart's executive vice president of global governance and chief legal officer. Really, just to sort of talk about Rachel's legal career, her experiences working in both the public and private sectors over decades at this point. And it was a tremendously interesting set of comments and sort of observations by Rachel.

**Rachel Brand:** Business is constantly evolving and that's true of every company that's going to be successful is you have to constantly be evolving with the world and with what your customers want, and with the competitive market and with regulatory expectations and so forth.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Yeah, Rachel was a great guest and what a great kickoff episode that was. Of course, Rachel, we're fortunate enough to call her a colleague here at WilmerHale several years ago, and really enjoyed her commentary on her career and how it's changed and

developed, and particularly some of her thoughts and advice in conversation with Alyssa about the business of lawyering and how important it is for lawyers to really understand the business of their client, whether that's in their role as in-house counsel or as an outside lawyer. A really interesting and valuable episode to kick off the season.

**John Walsh:** Absolutely, and, you know, you can't overlook as well, the fact that Rachel's career really is a remarkable testament to the advances of women in the legal profession and just the extraordinary set of accomplishments that she's been able to put together. And really, the skill that she has brought to every part of that career. And incredible, even as somebody who's pretty far along in my career, I found a lot of her comments and advice really helpful, and I can only imagine that they're even more so for younger lawyers.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Yeah, indeed. I remember being a younger lawyer at one point in my career when Rachel was here, and I certainly looked up to her then and continue to watch her amazing career in public and private sector with great admiration. Alright, well, after our episode with Rachel Brand, we had a number of episodes that really covered topics on the forefront of our national conversation today and, one example of that is the episode that our partner, Kim Parker, co-hosted with some representatives from Planned Parenthood—Helene Krasnoff and Dr. Amna Dermish—to discuss, at that point, what was the Supreme Court's looming, upcoming, expected decision in the Dobbs case and the impact of a Texas law, at that point, that banned abortions after approximately 6 weeks. A very interesting and really powerful, powerful episode. And, of course, there are a lot of developments after that episode that pretty accurately foreshadowed by that conversation. John, your thoughts on that episode?

**John Walsh:** Well, this one was emotionally packed conversation because what really came across is how difficult the landscape was for abortion providers at Planned Parenthood and elsewhere, and both Dr. Dermish and Helene Krasnoff clearly were struggling, both to do the best that they could, in a very uncertain legal landscape, and also to deal with the sort of the emotional toll of really dramatically changing circumstances for women seeking reproductive care. To me, the most compelling and difficult part of the conversation was when Dr. Dermish was describing exactly the impact that this is having on individual human beings—individual women—who are having to deal with what are, at times, arbitrary lines that have been drawn on what's legal and what's not.

**Dr. Amna Dermish:** It's a lot of emotion, you know. Every, every day having to tell somebody that I'm not able to provide them the care that they need is devastating for me and for the patient. I've had patients just curl up into a ball and cry and say, "can you hold my hand?"

**John Walsh:** It was hard, even as someone on the interviewing side, to not really feel the punch of the difficulty that they were facing. And, of course, then with the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision a few months later, things have only become that much more complex, that much more difficult. You know, Felicia, I think at the time that we did that interview in February of 2022, it was pretty clear there was either going to be a complete overturning of Roe versus Wade, or such a dramatic scaling back that both Helene and Dr. Dermish were bracing themselves for the reality of that.

**Helene Krasnoff:** We're going to see longer wait times in the states where abortion care is accessible, and what that actually means for people who become pregnant is that abortion becomes completely inaccessible.

**John Walsh:** Our thought, at this stage, is that we'll come back to Helene to talk a little bit about what the reality is on the ground post-Dobbs, both in Texas and more broadly, and the challenges that that really dramatic change in precedent has brought with it. It's a difficult situation and it's not getting any less difficult, a topic that I'm sure that we're just going to continue coming back to as the courts, frankly, keep coming back to it, as well.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** That's right, John. We'll certainly have at least one episode, if not more, in the upcoming seasons that talk about the legal and the practical and the personal aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision in Dobbs, and how that's impacted women's lives throughout the country and in different states in different ways. And, of course, how we as lawyers at WilmerHale and beyond have been involved in all of that work.

**John Walsh:** At the end of 2022, it sometimes feels as if we're past the pandemic, and I think we're all aware that that's not actually technically the case. But we were really fortunate to have a fascinating episode, as well, on the subject of the COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic itself has evolved, how the virus has evolved and also how our responses as a society have evolved.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Yeah, I don't know that we realized in 2020 that episodes about COVID-19 would turn out to be evergreen, but it does seem that it's a topic that continues to be of interest and of the moment. We had a really great guest, Andy Slavitt, who came and talked to us about some of the more practical implications of Covid, sharing his wisdom and experience during his time working on some of the COVID-19 response. And he had some thoughts about what we might see in the future in terms of COVID response at the state and municipal level.

**Andy Slavitt:** The real question is, do we have enough faith in each other and in our society and in our norms? Because before science can develop the tools that are necessary, the only defense we have is one another.

**John Walsh:** You know, the thing that I thought Andy was particularly thoughtful about describing is the pandemic revealed sort of the limits of our public health system and some of the challenges obviously on the medical side, but it also really kind of laid bare where we as a society trust each other and where maybe we don't completely trust each other. In other words, it was such an experiment for good and for less good in sort of making us think about what it is to be fellow citizens, working with each other all the time. This is a time when people talk often about how polarized we are. The pandemic certainly didn't help with that, and yet a couple of years after its beginning, I think we're hopefully getting our arms around how we might be able to move forward. We'll see. Hopefully this is not something that we're going to be doing a lot of episodes on in the future, but you just never know. It's a wily opponent, COVID-19.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Yeah, I think we'll certainly see it in season 3, but hopefully not season 4.

**John Walsh:** Exactly, exactly.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** We also had Jai Ramaswamy, Chief Legal Officer at Andreessen Horowitz, who came to the podcast for a really interesting, and frankly complicated episode to talk about the world of Web3, which includes cryptocurrency and NFT's. He was joined by John and my partners, Tiffany Smith and Zach Goldman, and Jai explained some of the differences between Web1, Web2, Web3, and the three of them had a really interesting conversation about how all of these things are likely to affect business and how we think about technology. So just a really, really interesting and timely episode given all that we see going on with cryptocurrency really, even since the episode was recorded and released.

**Jai Ramaswamy:** Web3 is read, write and own where you can actually own a little part of the Internet. It's actually native property rights on the Internet that allow you to own content, to own information on the Internet, and it makes it kind of read, write, own.

**John Walsh:** You know, that little clip demonstrates what I thought was so compelling about the way Jai approached this issue because he took something that oftentimes seems incomprehensible, you know cryptocurrency, blockchain, all of this kind of stuff and was able to boil it down to something that was a lot more understandable and also demystified it to some degree. Having said that, it's still—as you said, Felicia—incredibly complicated, and it's really interesting to see that this episode got a particularly large amount of attention from our listeners, and, I think, it's because people are looking for some explanation. There's so much media coverage, of course, of cryptocurrency and the ups and downs—volatility of that market. But also NFTs and other things that just seem sort of counterintuitive until you really learn a little bit more about what they are at a basic level, and Jai was a tremendous guide for that entire endeavor.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Completely agreed. A really interesting and educational and informative episode. For those of you that haven't yet had a chance to listen to it, it's certainly recommended to you. We then had several other really interesting and powerful episodes this season that focused on individual stories at the center of some legal cases that were handled here at our firm by some of our partners at WilmerHale.

**John Walsh:** For example, we heard from Ahmed, a translator for the U.S. military in Afghanistan, who fled the country after the Taliban takeover in 2021. He also acted as sort of the guide and leader of over 100 refugees who escaped Afghanistan with him.

**Ahmed:** Everybody thought it's unreal because nobody imagined that the Afghan government will collapse in nine days. I request the U.S. government and all other departments whom are involved in this immigration crisis to please help them since they were working for the U.S. government shoulder by shoulder.

**John Walsh:** One of the things those clips demonstrate is that Ahmed felt such a commitment to other Afghans who are in a similar situation to him. In other words, actually at risk, their lives at risk after the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan, an obligation to help them as well. And

what was, at times, a really deep confidence that people in the United States would help. What jumped out so much to me personally and listening to him describe the situation is first, the extent to which he and so many other Afghans had worked—as Ahmed had said, “shoulder by shoulder”—with the Americans who had come to Afghanistan. And then, secondly, the extent to which so many people that he had formed partnerships with over the years reached out to him affirmatively to make sure that he was okay, and gave him the opportunity to do what he felt compelled to do, which is to help, as many other Afghans as he could. A truly compelling story that I'm sure reflects the difficulties and challenges that so many other Afghans faced then and continue to face.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** That's so true, John. The title of the episode we drew, of course, from that last clip that we just heard. The Afghan translators were working shoulder by shoulder really with the United States government and how important that was to Ahmed and to his fellow translators. And, the plea really that he gave to the U.S. government today, now that he and so many others who played such important roles in helping the United States military while we were in Afghanistan—the plea that they'd be afforded some help from the United States government here, and the refugee crisis in which they find themselves in. And, of course, Ahmed's been very active in helping a lot of those folks here, here in the U.S., as has many in the legal community, including some of us at WilmerHale. Really powerful, really powerful episode.

**John Walsh:** Yeah, and I'm sure that work is going to continue for a long time. I know that many attorneys at WilmerHale are actively engaged in that, and with the help of people like Ahmed, are going to be in a much better position to actually assist with applications for humanitarian parole, and other really important legal steps that have to be taken to assist folks who really need the help.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** We were also lucky enough to be joined by Romina Picolotti, an environmental activist and former Argentine secretary of the Environment and Sustainable Development. She was joined by some of our WilmerHale colleagues who worked on her case, Kelsey Quigley and Jessica Lutkenhaus. They worked on Romina's case over the Inter American Commission on Human Rights.

**John Walsh:** Yeah, Romina's story is so fascinating and, unfortunately, it's not the only one like this where an environmental protector is essentially targeted for their work. She was working hard in her role for the Argentine government to move forward environmental efforts in that country, and really has faced the consequences of that. And that's why the case before the Inter American Commission on Human Rights is so important. It's inspiring to see people so committed that, in Romina's case, she ultimately had to leave Argentina because of the retaliation that she faced.

**Romina Picolotti:** I keep saying to my husband if dogs are barking, it's because we're doing a good work, this is what we should be doing, so we keep working. You know, we're very difficult and violent times.

**John Walsh:** Clearly Romina is reflected by that short clip, recognized that the fact that she was generating such opposition was a reflection of the importance of her work. That's an unfortunate commentary on the reality in any number of places, but it's hard not to be inspired by her example, and particularly when she calls for us all to think about how we can make choices in our lives that are truly pro planet.

**Romina Piccolotti:** Each time that you have a choice, take a choice pro planet. If you run 10 blocks away, do not take an uber, you know, just walk every time that you have a choice. Please there is a choice pro planet and just take it.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Finally, on a very special Memorial Day episode, we were really honored to welcome Rob, a veteran who served in Afghanistan and our colleague, Amy Doberman, who worked on his case for combat-related special compensation or CRSC. Rob shared his very personal story with us, including his combat injuries that ultimately led him to seek out CRSC, and he had some words of advice and encouragement for other veterans who may be suffering in the same way that Rob was.

**Rob:** If there's any inclination that you think you don't rate it or you don't deserve it, or your injuries aren't bad enough, put that aside and reach out to you guys and let the experts do what you guys do best.

**John Walsh:** You know, listening to Rob really dramatized exactly what that clip reflects, which is he himself had been reluctant to seek compensation, even though he had been repeatedly injured and, ultimately, wasn't able to continue serving on active duty because of his injuries, he nevertheless was hesitant to seek any kind of compensation. It was only with the assistance of both WilmerHale and outside groups that he was able to see how important that is. So, his call to other veterans who've been injured, these are injuries that they've incurred in the service of our country and they should not be hesitating to take advantage of the programs that are out there for a good reason. You know, if you've been so injured that it's affecting every part of your life, there's a reason that you should be compensated. That's something that WilmerHale is incredibly proud to be working on, not just with Rob, but with many other veterans, and it's really important that veterans realize that it's out there and avail themselves of the opportunity.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** People like me and others at our firm and elsewhere that do this important work would tell you how incredibly rewarding it is to work with an individual like Rob or any of our veterans. It's really a measurable impact that you can have on somebody's life through this type of work. So, really a great episode. And really nice to have that come out around Memorial Day, at a time when we, of course, are remembering our troops.

**John Walsh:** Absolutely, and Rob's personal story just reminds us all of the sacrifices that a relatively small percentage of the US population has had to make, not just once or twice or three times, but repeatedly over the course of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and other wars and conflicts all around the world. That really unswerving devotion to duty that people like Rob have demonstrated. It's the least we can do to make sure that they get compensated if they've come out of that physically injured and emotionally affected as well.



**Felicia Ellsworth:** So, that's it for season 2. I hope you enjoyed this walk down memory lane for some of the different episodes we've featured this past season. If you didn't have a chance to listen to a particular episode or want to listen to another one again, the links to all of the episodes from season 2 are in the show notes. John, I've just had so much fun doing this podcast this season, it's been really, really interesting and fun for me to learn a little bit about how we do the podcast, of course, but also some of the different stories and great guests that we were able to have on. I'm really looking forward to season 3 and some of the new and interesting topics that I'm sure we'll have the opportunity to cover. Anything in particular you're looking forward to for next season, John.

**John Walsh:** I just think every one of these episodes is like a little world in itself and getting exposed to it and getting to learn a little bit about things that are going on in the world. Look, we're living in a challenging time. There are so many difficult issues that are being presented to us both within the United States and around the world. And, our opportunity to talk to people who are working on all of these things is just a gift. And, certainly, we hope that it's something that is also a gift to our audience. Season 3 will begin at the beginning of 2023. We take a couple of months to kind of get our thoughts and program ideas in order. It's going to be fun. And we're really looking forward to it all the way around.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Well, I'm sure we'll have a lot of great episodes on issues of public interest, as the name indicates, issues large and small and featuring some of our partners and colleagues here at WilmerHale as well. Learn a little bit more about some of their cases and some of their really important work that we, as lawyers, can do in this, as you said, John, this ever changing very interesting complex time that we're living in. So, we look forward to everyone tuning in for season 3.

**John Walsh:** Yeah, everyone, please do tune in. And, if you have suggestions on topics, feel free to send those along. We'd love to address them. One of the great things here is we're trying to deal with topics that are legal in nature, but that are of much broader interest to that as well. Thank you all and thanks for tuning in. We look forward to talking to you soon.

**Felicia Ellsworth:** Thanks very much, everyone.