

Milbank Will Fight Feds: Lawyers Slash Hourly Rate for Sanctuary Cities

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Neal Katyal (L) and Gurbir Grewal (R) of Milbank. Photos: Diego M. Radzinski/ALM/Courtesy photo

Milbank has signed on to represent New Jersey cities in a challenge to their "sanctuary" policies, after Neal Katyal and other prominent lawyers agreed to major reductions of their hourly rates.

Katyal, who was acting solicitor general in the Obama administration, typically charges \$3,250 an hour. But he will cap his rate at \$300 per hour for the suit against Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken and Paterson, according to the firm's contract.

Newark and Hoboken will each pay half of the firm's bills.

Four others from Milbank will also work for \$300 per hour—Gurbir Grewal, a former head of enforcement for the Securities and Exchange Commission, who typically charges \$2,475 hourly; Colleen Roh Sinzdek, a former Assistant to the Solicitor General, whose typical hourly rate is \$1,975; Kristina Alekseyeva, whose usual rate is \$1,515; and Peter Farag, whose usual rate is \$1,405 per hour.

Katyal and his team agreed to cap billing at \$25,000, according to the proposal.

The Milbank lawyers will represent the group of cities in a suit filed May 22 by the Department of Justice, which alleges their policies against cooperating with federal immigration enforcement violate the U.S. Constitution's Supremacy Clause.

Milbank was one of three firms to reply to Hoboken's request for proposals for the sanctuary city suit.

The others were New Jersey firms—Scarinci Hollenbeck; and Florio Kenny Raval.

A Hoboken resolution authorizing Milbank's hiring said the city "has determined Milbank LLP is best qualified to provide effective, efficient, and cost-appropriate representation."

Milberg's response to the request for proposals notes it represented the City of Philadelphia in a Department of Justice challenge of that city's sanctuary city policy. In that case, a federal judge ruled in Philadelphia's favor in 2017, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit upheld the ruling in 2019.