

## Farmworker Activist Wins 2007 Morris Dees Justice Award

*Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates and The University of Alabama School of Law announced today that Arthur N. Read, Esq., of Philadelphia, has been awarded the 2007 Morris Dees Justice Award. The award will be presented in New York on November 15, 2007.*

New York, NY (PRWEB) October 1, 2007 -- Arthur N. Read, General Counsel for Friends of Farmworkers, Inc., a legal services provider in Philadelphia, has been awarded the 2007 Morris Dees Justice Award. Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates and The University of Alabama School of Law announced Mr. Read's honor today. Morris Dees will present the award during a reception at Skadden's offices in New York on November 15, 2007.

The Morris Dees Justice Award was created in 2006 by Skadden and The University of Alabama School of Law to honor Dees, an Alabama graduate, for his life-long devotion to public service. The award is given annually to a lawyer who has devoted his or her career to serving the public interest and pursuing justice, and whose work has brought about positive change in the community, state or nation. Last year's winner was U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice, of the Eastern District of Texas.

The selection committee recognized Read for nearly 30 years of tireless, courageous, and effective representation of farmworkers and immigrants.

Read was nominated by more than 20 organizations and individuals. As Pennsylvania Secretary of the Commonwealth Pedro A. Cortés noted in his supporting letter, "It is fitting that he be considered in the company of Morris Dees . . . . In a like manner, Mr. Read has dedicated his career and life to providing a voice for the disadvantaged and advocating on behalf of the underprivileged."

Read graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1972 and from New York University School of Law in 1976. He worked at Eisner, Levy, Steel and Bellman, P.C., and at Camden Regional Legal Services prior to joining Friends of Farmworkers in 1982.

A frequent lecturer and author on workers' rights, Read is well-known for his representation of workers. In *Vlasic Farms, Inc. v. Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board* (2001), he won for workers in Pennsylvania's mushroom industry the right to organize. His collective bargaining agreements for the Kaolin Workers Union are the only such contracts in the mushroom industry.

In *El Concilia v. DER* (1984), Read brought a class-action lawsuit arguing that Pennsylvania had failed to inspect camp housing for workers. As a result of the litigation, camp housing was largely brought into compliance with state and federal law.

His lawsuits under the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Relations Act resulted in injunctive relief that has served as a model for compliance. His work also established one of the first alternative dispute resolution systems with Pennsylvania's vegetable producers.

Read has also been an advocate for those with limited English proficiency. His work on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Gender Bias contributed to a law mandating certified court interpreters.

Those who nominated Read described him as a tireless, productive, creative, ethical, and client-centered advocate. He is also widely respected for his professional relationships with opposing counsel.

His personal and professional courage were highlighted in a 2002 profile in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, which wrote:

"Arthur Read was an idealistic 27-year-old lawyer in the summer of 1979 when the short-fused, 300-pound foreman of a migrant farm labor crew came after him with a knife. It took 220 stitches to repair the gash in Read's face. Forty more to close the wound in his stomach. Today, he is an idealistic 50-year-old lawyer, with a gentle paunch and a scar

that runs from the edge of his jaw to the side of his nose.”

As Thomas Cook, who worked with Read during those years, wrote in his supporting letter, “Most people would have decided not to continue visiting labor camps, but not Art. I don’t think it even slowed him down.”

The 2007 winner was selected by a distinguished committee, which includes:

- Mary Bauer, Southern Poverty Law Center
- Debbie Elliott, National Public Radio
- Professor Bryan Fair, The University of Alabama School of Law
- Professor Jack Greenberg, Columbia Law School
- Judge William Wayne Justice, 2006 Morris Dees Justice Award Winner
- Susan Butler Plum, Skadden Fellowship Program
- Dean Kenneth Randall, The University of Alabama School of Law
- Robert C. Sheehan, Skadden
- Jamiene S. Studley, Public Advocates, Inc.
- John Trasvina, MALDEF
- Tari Devon Williams, The University of Alabama School of Law
- Vaughn C. Williams, Skadden

Dees, a 1960 graduate of The University of Alabama School of Law, is the co-founder and chief trial counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. The Center is internationally known for tracking hate groups and extremist activity, conducting tolerance training education and winning cases against white supremacists.