

McGuireWoods, McGuireWoods Consulting Win FAA Exemption for Air Animal Rescue Nonprofit

PRO BONO EFFORTS HELP PAART EXPAND ITS LIFESAVING FLIGHTS

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A nonprofit Pittsburgh airborne animal rescue team can whisk pets out of harm's way and into safe, loving environments more quickly and effectively thanks to McGuireWoods' pro bono intervention with the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Pittsburgh Aviation Animal Rescue Team (PAART), which relies on volunteer pilots and their planes to save animals in distress by flying them to safety, could not reimburse volunteer pilots for flight operating expenses because of FAA regulations. Asking volunteers to absorb costs of fuel, oil, rental fees and airport expenses made it difficult for PAART to find volunteer pilots for its lifesaving flights over much of the United States.

PAART co-founder and pilot Jonathan Plesset asked McGuireWoods and its full-service public policy arm, McGuireWoods Consulting, to help petition the FAA for an exemption to its regulations — something the agency rarely grants. Pittsburgh lawyers [Matt Monsour](#) and [Kelsey Hitchcock](#) along with [Greg Walden](#), a Washington, D.C., lawyer and senior advisor with McGuireWoods Consulting, went to work.

The firm drafted a detailed exemption petition that outlined PAART's heroic work rescuing animals from imminent euthanasia in crowded shelters and perilous situations such as the aftermath of natural disasters, allowing the charity to find adoptive homes or reunite pets with their families.

The FAA granted the request in November 2018, a move that empowered PAART to ramp up its efforts to help rescue animals displaced by California's deadly wildfires. The decision could also pave the way for similar animal rescue flight nonprofits to become the angels' wings for animals facing their most desperate hours.

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