

# MASSACHUSETTS LAWYERS WEEKLY

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*Up & Coming*  
LAWYERS

## WILLIAM J. BARABINO



By Eric T. Berkman

Wakefield criminal defense lawyer William J. Barabino started his career with two high-profile cases and hasn't slowed down since.

On his very first day of practice, he walked into Salem District Court only to be greeted by a pool of cameras and a reporter from The Boston Globe. It turned out they were covering the bail hearing of a man accused of indecent assault and battery. It also turned out the man was Barabino's client.

But instead of being distracted by the media, Barabino did what he was trained to do: focus on his client's case. And the defendant was released on personal recognition instead of the \$50,000 bail the district attorney was requesting.

"I realized I was there for my client and not the media," says Barabino, who was an Army paratrooper before going to law school. "But the real key to my success was that I was prepared."

Less than a year later, after leaving a small firm and going solo, Barabino found himself before the Supreme Judicial Court as co-counsel in a criminal appeal. Though he did not argue the matter, he played a key research role. The case resulted in a new rule allowing judges

to instruct juries to view with "great caution" any confession that is not recorded by police.

Since then, Barabino's solo practice has grown as he's obtained dozens of acquittals and dismissals in everything from drunk-driving and probation-violation cases to rape and murder. But he's especially proud of representing youthful offenders.

"It's such a big responsibility, because juveniles are only charged as adults for the most serious crimes," Barabino says. "I'm representing the people who need it the most."

The case that stands out most for him involved a 15-year-old charged with assault with intent to murder. The defendant was found not competent to stand

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trial but still was held on \$50,000 bail until Barabino success-

fully challenged the constitutionality of the youth's confession. The charges were ultimately dismissed.

"He would have otherwise sat in jail or a locked facility for years [awaiting trial]," Barabino says. "I remember driving him home from court and having his mother bow to me in what looked like a vow of appreciation. She was a Cambodian immigrant who had been a victim of the Khmer Rouge [in the 1970s], and in a way she felt re-victimized not being with her son. We brought them back together. It was very emotional." **MW**

AGE: 38

GRADUATED: Massachusetts School of Law, 2003

POSITION: Sole practitioner, Wakefield

One thing about him that might surprise people: "I've been authorized to represent Guantanamo prisoners since August 2003."



WILLIAM J. BARABINO  
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