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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VAN NESS FELDMAN DUBBED CHAMPION OF YOUTH

Washington, D.C. — On January 22, 2009, National Network for Youth, a national organization that has been championing the needs of runaway, homeless and other disconnected youth for over 30 years, awarded Van Ness Feldman, P.C. a Champions for Youth Award. A team of lawyers and policy professionals from the Firm provided their services *pro bono* to assist NN4Y with its Congressional advocacy efforts during the 2008 reauthorization of the Juvenile Protection Act.

“Some amazing strides towards empowering youth were made in this past year, thanks to our champions,” says National Network for Youth CEO and President, Victoria Wagner. “The *pro bono* work of Van Ness Feldman on the Juvenile Protection Act will create safer, better places for those who need it most.”

With the Act up for reauthorization, NN4Y saw the opportunity to eliminate the valid court order (VCO) exception and require states to adopt community-based alternatives to incarceration for youths who are status offenders (truants, runaways, curfew violators, etc.). NN4Y’s experience demonstrates that the availability of various community-based services can be far more effective than jail time and accruing arrest records in helping these children and teens resolve their situations and stay out of trouble.

Van Ness Feldman analyzed the laws of all 50 states (and D.C.) to determine which states use the VCO exception. This analysis served as the basis for NN4Y’s outreach to legislators. In August of 2008, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a markup on the Juvenile Protection Act reauthorization bill and passed an amendment on an 11 to 7 vote to eliminate the VCO exception, a huge victory for NN4Y on an extremely controversial issue for the Committee. While the provision eliminating the VCO exception was not ultimately included in the version of the Act that passed in 2008, the groundwork laid by this effort will serve as the starting point for 2009 efforts. NN4Y and Van Ness Feldman will continue to advocate for this provision.

Howard Feldman, Chairman of Van Ness Feldman, said, “We are deeply honored to receive this recognition from the National Network for Youth, and we’re proud of our team of dedicated lawyers and policy professionals who helped advance the legislation. Our firm has a proud legacy of community service on behalf of at-risk youth, so it’s doubly gratifying to see the Network’s efforts benefit these young people and to have had a hand in that progress.”

National Network for Youth celebrated the work of Van Ness Feldman, at *Symposium 2009: The National Network for Youth: Celebrating Youth, Inspiring Leadership, Creating Change* on Tuesday evening, January 27, 2009, during a special reception on Capitol Hill, in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. NN4Y honored achievements on behalf of runaway and homeless youth and acknowledged those members of Congress and the House who made a significant impact on their work in the past year.

Founded in 1977, Van Ness Feldman helps clients in a variety of industries achieve their business goals by designing and complying with the nation’s energy and environmental laws. The firm has over 80 lawyers and policy professionals in Washington, DC and Seattle, WA.

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