

## Profiles

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### Roger Synenberg

Synenberg, Coletta & Moran LLC

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Roger Synenberg is first to tell you he is “a lucky guy,” with “a lot of interesting things going on.” It isn’t until he starts describing some of those things that one realizes what he sees on a daily basis as a criminal defense attorney.

“A lot of people who I represent are people like your dad or your mom or you, or people who never got in trouble before and all of a sudden they wake up one day and their life is turned upside down,” Synenberg said. “People who have never been in the system cannot believe it works the way it does, and it’s not always to that person’s advantage.”

In his 39 years as a defense attorney, Synenberg said he has defended people who were sentenced during former President Bill Clinton’s administration for “a little bit of cocaine,” who are still in prison. Defending clients against either the state or U.S. government, Synenberg said each day he sees himself and his clients as the underdog.



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“It’s the government versus your client and all he or she has in their corner is you,” he said.

Unlike his wife, Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Judge Joan Synenberg, who knew she wanted to be a defense attorney since childhood, Synenberg never set out to work in the field. In fact, early in Synenberg’s career he reported to a new job in the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the civil division – at least he thought.

“They said that job is filled, the only job we have is in the criminal division,” Synenberg said. “But I got into it and I really began to see you are in a fabulous position to make a difference.

"I was always very interested in making sure people weren't being taken advantage of, I didn't like people being bullied," he said.

Synenberg points to government abuse as one of the biggest challenges in his work. He also said that today, when people need a defense attorney, they often look to the quality of a lawyer's website, rather than word of mouth and personal recommendations, as was done in the past. He said this leaves some clients hiring lawyers who are not a good fit for the help they need.

Synenberg has also been special counsel to the Ohio Attorney General for almost 20 years. Last year he also received two new distinct honors: he was appointed to the Ohio Public Defender Commission by Gov. John Kasich and was asked by Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court Maureen O'Connor to be part of a task force studying improvements to the Ohio grand jury system.

For the task force, Synenberg said the group looked into police shooting cases, which recommended that all fatal police shootings should be investigated exclusively by the Ohio Attorney General's office. For the Public Defender Commission, Synenberg works to assess whether adequate public defense representation is available for those needing it.

"It's a very important agency because it ensures defendant's rights," he said.



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### Roger Synenberg

**City of residence:** Cleveland

**Firm:** Synenberg, Coletta & Moran LLC

**Area of practice:** Litigation and criminal defense

### Amanda Koehn

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