

**Minutes**  
**Public Service and Trust Commission**  
**Pro Bono Committee**  
**March 20, 2012**

The Pro Bono Committee met on Tuesday, March 20, 2012 at 2:30pm in the Attorney's Conference Room, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon William Bright, Chair, Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein, Attorney Norman Janes, Attorney David Ryan, Attorney Livia Barndollar, Attorney Ian Lodovice, Attorney Kimberly Knox, Attorney Janice Chiaretto, Attorney Alfred Casella, Attorney Gregg Benson, Attorney Ed Heath, Attorney Timothy Johnston, and Attorney Mark Nordstrom.

Attorney Daniel Horwitch from Judicial Branch Legal Services was in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 pm.

1. The Committee voted to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2012 Pro Bono Committee meeting. The following members abstained: Attorney Timothy Johnston, Attorney Gregg Benson and Attorney Ian Lodovice.

2. Judge Bright provided an update to the Committee on the post-Summit follow-up with the large firms. Shortly after the Summit, a letter was sent to the representatives from the firms that attended the Summit thanking them for attending and asking them to consider implementing a signature pro bono project. The response to the initial follow-up was fair so additional outreach was conducted by Justice Rogers and Judge Bright with positive results. For example, the partners from Halloran & Sage participated in the Thunderdome Family Clinic where pro bono attorneys represent low income parties in divorce cases. This model of pro bono assistance is exactly the success story that the Summit was intended to encourage. The Halloran & Sage partners created "top-down" support for pro bono work and it's a great model for other large law firms and corporations to follow.

In addition, Justice Rogers and Judge Bright were contacted by and met with the partners from Bingham McCutchen to discuss how they could become more involved in pro bono work. The Bingham McCutchen attorneys expressed an interest in the Judicial Branch's Volunteer Attorney Program in foreclosure, in particular, the program the Branch hopes to start in Hartford in the coming months. In order to learn more about the foreclosure program, the Bingham partners observed the volunteer foreclosure program in the New Haven Judicial District. They were very impressed by the program and renewed their commitment to participate in the Hartford program when it's developed.

3. A discussion was had regarding how best to identify retired attorneys for purposes of pro bono work. A suggestion was made to contact Statewide Grievance to obtain a list

of attorneys who are still “active” but who pay the reduced Client Security Fund fee because they are retired from the practice of law.

The Committee continued discussing how best to utilize the skills of the retired attorneys in pro bono and a suggestion was made to create a lawyer of the day program in a busy small claims court such as the Manchester G.A. The Committee agreed that many self-represented parties do not understand the small claims process and need to have it explained to them in a way they can understand.

4. The Committee also discussed the role that law students can play in pro bono. The Committee further discussed the changing landscape of the legal profession and how the numbers of law students admitted into our law schools and websites such as Legal Zoom are affecting the overall practice of law.

Judge Bright then shared the preliminary results of the pro bono survey that was posted on the E-Services website as part of annual attorney registration. During the two month period that the survey was posted, 18,551 attorneys responded. Of that total number, 12,603 attorneys reported that they engaged in “0” hours of pro bono service, 1,843 attorneys reported that they performed between 1-10 hours of pro bono service, 1,452 reported between 11-20 hours, 1,029 attorneys reported performing between 21-35 hours of service, another 616 attorneys reported 36-50 hours of service and finally, 1,008 attorneys responded that they performed 51 hours or more of pro bono service during 2011. 8,935 attorneys declined to participate in the survey.

The Committee discussed these results and agreed that Connecticut attorneys had the capacity to do much more than what was reported, but these preliminary results offered a solid baseline to measure progress going forward.

Judge Bright also reported to the Committee on the New Haven County Bar Association’s mini pro bono summit that was attended by approximately 50 attorneys. The attendees were given information on the pro bono portal and catalog and Judge Bright addressed the group about the importance of and the need for more pro bono service.

5. The Committee then discussed different ideas to encourage attorneys to do more pro bono work and everyone agreed that recognition from the bench was of paramount importance. Specifically, the Committee discussed an idea that was proposed by Claudia Mangan from Statewide Legal Services to create a newsletter that recognized attorneys who perform pro bono work. The newsletter would be electronically sent from the legal service provider that sponsors the program and the judge in the location where the pro bono work was performed would be blind copied on the email. This would allow the judges to respond to the pro bono attorneys with their thanks and appreciation. Another suggestion from Attorney Mangan was to give attorneys who accept pro bono cases a lapel pin to wear prominently while in court. She suggested that the court could recognize the attorneys wearing the lapel pins and point it out to the other attorneys in the room to encourage them to perform more pro bono work. The Committee thought there

were both positive and negative aspects to publicly recognizing attorneys for their pro bono contributions but everyone agreed that recognition from the bench was a critical part of a successful long term pro bono initiative.

Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein provided the Committee with a brief overview of the presentation provided by the Pro Bono Partnership last month regarding "best practices" for a successful pro bono model. Attorney Eppler-Epstein discussed such issues as the availability of discrete or short term pro bono projects that would allow an attorney to volunteer their time without committing to long term representation, referring cases to attorneys in an area of law that they are familiar with, ensuring that the pro bono initiative has a strong hierarchal authority that is consistently reinforced by the partners, and taking steps to recognize and/or thank the volunteer attorneys for their pro bono commitments.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 3:51p.m.
7. The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be announced.