

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
June 5, 2014

The Pro Bono Committee met on Thursday, June 5, 2014 at 2:30pm at 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford in the Attorney Conference Room.

Those in attendance: Honorable William J. Bright, Jr., Chair, Attorney Jonathan Shapiro, Attorney Lester Arnold, Attorney Timothy Johnston, Attorney Susan Nofi, Attorney Jamey Bell, Attorney Jan Chiaretto, Attorney Sarah Sia, Professor Timothy Everett, Attorney Norman Janes, Attorney Alfred Casella, Attorney Susan Dornfeld, Honorable Timothy Keeney, Attorney Mark Nordstrom, and Attorney Steven Eppler-Epstein.

The meeting was called to order at 2:36 pm.

1. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2014 Pro Bono Committee meeting.
2. Attorney Shapiro, Chair of the Follow-Up Summit Workgroup, provided the Committee with an overview of the May 14, 2014 Pro Bono Summit. Attorney Shapiro reported that approximately 97 people attended the Summit which included interactive discussion panels of judges and a separate attorney panel. The Judge panel, which was moderated by Pro Bono Committee Chair, Judge William Bright, consisted of Appellate Court Chief Judge Alexandra DiPentima, Chief Administrative Judge for family matters Elizabeth Bozzuto, and Probate Court Administrator, Judge Paul Knierim. The panel discussed the different challenges to pro bono experienced by the trial, appellate and probate courts, as well as the unique operational needs faced by each when grappling with the challenges that self-represented parties face in their respective courts. Similarly, the attorney panel, moderated by Attorney Shapiro and comprised of Attorneys Eve Runyon, John Farley, Sandy Broadus, and Ed Heath, discussed some of the challenges and successes of implementing a new pro bono program. The panel discussed the importance of institutional support, particularly, a top-down approach to pro bono that sends a positive message to the rest of the organization about the level of importance and commitment to pro bono work.
3. In addition, Attorney Shapiro provided an overview of the Summit break-out sessions which asked each group to think about and discuss some of the pro bono concepts and ideas they learned about during the first half of the Summit. Specifically, the facilitated sessions were charged with discussing what types of initiatives could be undertaken in their organization, what areas were they interested in learning more about and how the courts, judges and the legal services community can help. Notes were taken during each discussion group and

the notes were transcribed and will be distributed electronically to the break-out session participants, including the individual moderators. Once the session notes are distributed, attendees will be invited to contact Pro Bono Committee staff if they are interested in participating in or learning more about any of the initiatives discussed during the break-out sessions.

Lastly, Attorney Shapiro gave praise to the legal services community for creating the pro bono video that was shown at the Summit. The video included appearances from Chief Justice Rogers, Governor Malloy, Judge Bright and numerous others, as well as testimonials from clients who have had their lives changed because they were represented by a pro bono attorney. The video is available on <http://probono.ctlawhelp.org/>

The Committee continued to discuss the importance of a sustained, organized follow-up effort with those who attended the Summit. A suggestion was made to form a workgroup to identify “doable” pro bono projects that were discussed during the Summit break-out sessions and conduct a more targeted follow-up in an effort to match projects with potential firms or corporations. Judge Bright requested that once the workgroup is formed, the members work through the summer to identify potential projects for the fall. Judge Bright asked any of the Pro Bono Committee members who were interested in serving as members of the new workgroup to contact him or Committee staff. The Committee further reiterated the goal of creating self-sustaining, signature projects much like the Robinson & Cole domestic violence program currently running in Hartford and Middletown.

4. Next, Judge Bright discussed the Summit evaluations that have been received from program participants. He reported that only 15 completed evaluations had been received so far, however, they were qualitatively very good in their review of the Summit. Staff will send out an additional reminder to the attendees asking them to complete an evaluation as the feedback from attendees will weigh in heavily during the planning for subsequent pro bono events.
5. The Committee discussed its focus going forward and Judge Bright reported on the 40 at 50 Judicial Pro Bono Recognition initiative organized by the D.C. Circuit Judicial Conference Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services. The initiative recognized firms with a Washington D.C. office who employed at least 25 attorneys where at least 40 percent of those attorneys performed at least 50 hours of pro bono work. Judge Bright discussed this initiative and invited the Committee to think about and comment on whether this or some other model might be effective recognition models for Connecticut. The issue of recognizing pro bono attorneys is one that the Committee has and continues to undertake. Judge Bright suggested the formation of a small workgroup to study the 40 at 50 model and other successful recognition models across the country. Any members of the Committee who were interested in serving as Recognition members should contact Judge Bright or staff.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein suggested that mini-summits be organized at the local bar level during their regularly scheduled meetings and also suggested that it might be helpful if Justice Rogers and/or Judge Bright could attend these events. Attorney Eppler-Epstein reported that the CBA maintains a list of all of the local and affinity bar groups. The Committee agreed to contact CBA President-Elect Bill Clendenen to see if he would be interested in the mini-pro bono summits.

Judge Bright took a moment to thank the members of the Committee for all of their hard work and dedication to the work of the Pro Bono Committee. Judge Bright acknowledged that many members have been on the Committee since its inception in the early part of 2010 and he understands that with busy practices and more and more competing priorities, the commitment can become burdensome. As a result, Judge Bright invited everyone to remain members of the Committee; however, if anyone wished to resign their membership, he understood completely and asked that any resigning members notify staff of their decision over the summer.

Attorney Janes reported that there will be a joint symposium sponsored by the Connecticut Bar Foundation and the legal aid community on the history of legal aid on Friday, October 17th.

Additionally, Judge Bright reported that on Thursday, June 19th, the Connecticut Law Tribune will hold its pro bono recognition and award dinner at the New Haven Lawn Club. The Administrative Judges from each Judicial District each identified an attorney who epitomized the spirit and message of pro bono and all thirteen (13) attorneys will be recognized for their outstanding pro bono contributions.

Attorney Jan Chiaretto, Executive Director of Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut and Pro Bono Committee member reported out to the Committee on the LSC pro bono initiative grant application that will focus on providing training to pro bono attorneys in the areas of Limited Scope Representation (LSR) and the substantive law for post-judgment contempt matters in family. The grant application is due on June 30th and is for a two-year period. Attorney Chiaretto also addressed the importance of identifying clients for whom LSR is appropriate and educating attorneys on the practices of LSR and the critical understanding that limited representation is no different from full representation in that the same amount of caution and discretion must be employed when deciding whether to represent someone. Attorney Eppler-Epstein reported that one of his colleagues in Boston observed that LSR made a significant difference and impact on the legal aid community and the number of eligible clients they could assist when only entering a limited appearance.

The Pro Bono Committee inquired about the number of limited appearances that have been filed in Connecticut since the rules became effective in October 2013. Committee staff will provide current statistics for LSR.

The Pro Bono Committee agreed to reconvene in September and the Committee briefly discussed the possibility of utilizing the Branch's video-conferencing technology so members who travel could participate remotely.

The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be held on Thursday, September 18, 2014 at 3:30p.m. at 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35p.m.