

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
January 10, 2012

The Pro Bono Committee met on Tuesday, January 10, 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 Jeffrey Eglash, Attorney Dwight Merriam, Attorney David Ryan, Attorney Livia Barndollar, Attorney Ian Lodovico, Attorney Kimberly Knox, Attorney Janice Chiaretto and Attorney Alfred Casella.

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

The meeting was called to order at 2:31 pm.

Judge Bright introduced new Committee member Attorney Kimberly Knox who replaced Attorney Barry Hawkins and new member Attorney David Ryan who will look into the feasibility of utilizing retired and semi-retired attorneys for pro bono work.

1. The Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2011 Pro Bono Committee meeting.
2. Judge Bright provided an update on the voluntary pro bono reporting survey that was added to the Annual electronic Attorney Registration process beginning January 3, 2012 through March 15, 2012. The Committee agreed that voluntary reporting was a good way to get attorneys accustomed to reporting on their annual pro bono service.

Judge Bright also reported to the Committee on the status of the presentation by the Pro Bono Partnership. The Committee hopes to reschedule the presentation which was to be at the January 10th meeting, to another date that is convenient for everyone. The Executive Director of the Pro Bono Partnership will talk to the Committee about establishing turnkey pro bono projects for the large Connecticut corporations.

Similarly, a discussion was held regarding the follow up with the large law firms since the Summit in October. Support staff will compile a list of law firms in Connecticut with 50 or more attorneys and will work with Judge Bright to begin outreach to these firms. The outreach may include meetings with Chief Justice Rogers, Judge Bright and representatives from the law firms to talk about establishing a signature pro bono program in their firm. In addition, follow up will also be done with the smaller firms that attended the Summit. Committee member Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein has a list of firms and corporations that the Committee can use to identify the appropriate firms and corporations to be sure those who have already made a large commitment or who already have an established signature project are not targeted.

A discussion was also held regarding the possibility of the Chief Justice attending a meeting of the Counsel of Bar Presidents in an effort to target smaller or solo firms across the state. A suggestion was also made to invite the Administrative or Presiding Judges from each Judicial District to the Counsel of Bar President's meeting and to also ask each Administrative Judge to hold individual brown bag luncheons in their districts to determine what the local issues are and how best to address them.

Judge Bright provided an update to the Committee on the status of the rule change concerning pro bono work by in-house counsel. A letter from Pro Bono Committee member Attorney Mark Nordstrom was submitted to the Rules Committee which outlined the Virginia and Colorado rules for pro bono service by in-house attorneys. The Virginia and Colorado rules allow in-house attorneys to perform pro bono work without the supervision of a local admitted attorney. However, Connecticut's Rules Committee voted to adopt the Delaware model which allows in-house attorneys to perform pro bono service so long as the work is performed under the supervision of an admitted Connecticut attorney.

Committee member Attorney David Ryan discussed the various areas where retired or semi-retired attorneys can be of most use. The Committee discussed the need for pro bono attorneys in areas such as immigration law. The Committee agreed that while there was a need in this area, immigration law was very complex and it might not be an appropriate area for attorneys who are unfamiliar with the complexities. A further discussion was had regarding UCONN Law School's clinic which assisted parties in deportation proceedings. Attorney Eppler-Epstein will look into whether these types of cases might be appropriate for retired and semi-retired attorneys.

Judge Bright informed the Committee that a meeting was being held with Chief Administrative Judge for Civil Matters, Linda Lager, CBA Pro Bono Committee members Peter Arakas and Diane Whitney and Court Operations staff regarding the utilization of retired and semi-retired attorneys for the Judicial Branch's Volunteer Attorney Programs. The Committee agreed to recommend that Small Claims was an area that might benefit from a Volunteer Attorney Program utilizing retired and semi-retired attorneys.

Lastly, the Committee discussed the issue of access to justice and how best to identify the gaps in legal services. Judge Bright discussed the Access to Justice subcommittee on Legal Aid and Civil Representation and suggested that since the dean of UCONN Law School was a member of the subcommittee, it might be beneficial to have the UCONN law students do an analysis of alternative means of legal representation to determine where the gaps in legal services are, and see what other models exist for providing these much needed services. The Committee agreed that a long term conversation about access to justice needed to take place in order to effect real change.

3. The meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.
4. The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be held on February 28, 2012 at 2:30 p.m.