

**Remarks by Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers  
2<sup>nd</sup> Pro Bono Summit  
LOB, Room 2C  
May 14, 2014**

Good afternoon, and welcome to the second Connecticut Pro Bono summit. This subject matter remains among my top priorities as Chief Justice, and I am extremely appreciative that each of you has made time in your busy lives to attend today's event.

Before I continue, I want to thank members of the Judicial Branch's Pro Bono Committee, headed by Judge Bill Bright, for again putting together the summit. In addition, I would be remiss if I did not mention Attorney Jonathan Shapiro, who worked closely with Judge Bright to plan the summit, along with Krista Hess, Roberta Palmer and Cheryl Halford.

I also want to thank Senator Eric Coleman, who will make closing remarks. As you know, Senator Coleman, as co-chair of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee, is both a valued member of the bar and a veteran lawmaker, and we not only welcome him today but also thank him for his continued support of the Judicial Branch.

Finally, I want to thank the "rising stars" who took time out of their schedule to attend the summit. The managing partner and general counsel of your firm or corporation identified you as an up-and-coming member of your organization who should be at the table as we discuss new and innovative pro bono projects.

So, why are we here today? Once again, we are asking everyone in this room to make pro bono services a top priority. Many people who represent themselves do so because they have no choice, and I continue to be extremely concerned that access to

justice may be compromised if individuals are not represented by counsel. These Pro Bono summits are the perfect forum for brainstorming ideas and energizing people who care about our legal system to make sure that we are doing all we can to ensure that people are represented whenever possible.

When the first Pro Bono Summit occurred in 2011, I think it's fair to say it was an extremely positive first step. What occurred afterward, however, was even more exciting.

Simply put, your firms and corporations answered the call and I'd like to highlight just a few of the initiatives that followed the summit. By way of example, one of your firms developed a signature project to provide assistance in Probate Court with pro bono appointments as conservators. There's also now a cooperative pro bono project to provide medical/legal intervention for indigent clients in domestic violence cases, housing cases involving children and employment cases.

The Young Lawyers Section of the Connecticut Bar Association stepped up to the challenge as well through its Pro Bono Service Campaign, which went from March to May of 2013. Nearly 50 individuals and/or law firms signed the pledge, and the number of pro bono hours performed in connection with the campaign was double what was anticipated, equaling more than \$2 million worth of pro bono services.

On the other side of the coin, the Judicial Branch has worked hard to keep up with all of you. For example, we've worked closely with the bar to implement Volunteer Attorney Programs in family and foreclosure law. We have programs for foreclosures in six judicial districts, New London being the latest addition, and for family, in three judicial districts. Thousands of self-represented parties have taken advantage of this

program, and it is yet another example of what we can do when we put our heads together.

So that's just some of the good news. However, there's also a cautionary note in that the problem we're addressing remains daunting. I'll provide just a couple of numbers to illustrate my point: in fiscal year 2012-13, the percentage of family cases with at least one self-represented party stood at 85 percent. On the civil side for the same time period, the percentage of cases with at least one self-represented party was 24 percent. Nationally, the numbers are worse and it is absolutely clear this is a trend that is not going away anytime soon.

With that, I've talked long enough, and we have a full agenda before us. Thank you again for attending today's summit and for stepping up to make a difference in the lives of people who need your advice, often at the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

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