

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
October 22, 2013

The Pro Bono Committee met on Tuesday, October 22, 2013 at 3:00pm 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-Bendici, Attorney Jamey Bell, Attorney Mark Dubois, Attorney William Clendenen, Attorney Jan Chiaretto, Attorney Sylvia Rutkowska, Attorney Sarah Sia and Professor Timothy Everett.

Guest speaker David Desjardins was present to address the Committee regarding the Quinnipiac University School of Law Student Expulsion Advocacy Project (SEAP).

Attorney Joseph DelCiampo from Judicial Branch Legal Services was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 pm.

1. The Committee voted to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2013 Pro Bono Committee meeting. Attorney Rutkowska abstained.
2. Judge Bright introduced Attorney Sarah Sia, a Court Officer for the Complex Litigation Docket in Hartford as a new member of the Pro Bono Committee.
3. Judge Bright introduced David Desjardins, a recent graduate of Quinnipiac Law School to address the Committee regarding the Student Expulsion Advocacy Project (SEAP). Mr. Desjardins explained that SEAP is a new, hybrid organization of law students at Quinnipiac University School of Law who were dedicated to providing advocacy for K-12 grade students facing expulsion. The project has been working with Attorney Mark Dubois on issues surrounding the unauthorized practice of law as law students may generally not engage in legal representation without the supervision of an admitted Connecticut attorney. To this end, Mr. Desjardins reported that SEAP was looking for volunteer attorney-supervisors to provide additional supervision to the law students along with attorney-professors at the law school. Attorney-supervisor responsibilities will range from allowing law student volunteers to observe them as they represent K-12 students in expulsion hearings, to overseeing law student research in preparation for expulsion hearings, to accompanying experienced law student volunteers to expulsion hearings where the law student will take the lead role in representing the client.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein complimented Mr. Desjardins on his work and the progress he has made as the founder of SEAP and Judge Bright inquired about whether the scope of the project also encompassed schools outside of New Haven. Mr. Desjardins responded that while New Haven was certainly most convenient and therefore the focal point, the students were not adverse to expanding the project to schools in Meriden and Bridgeport, assuming there was Board of Education approval.

The Committee along with Mr. Desjardins also discussed the best, most efficient way to advertise the program such as including information in the expulsion packet and adding the program to the Pro Bono Portal and the CBA's website. Mr. Desjardins also expressed interest in expanding the program to include other law schools once it was up and running.

4. Attorney Eppler-Epstein briefly reported to the Committee that the pro bono video had encountered a few road blocks but he would keep the Committee posted on the progress.
5. Judge Bright gave an update on the Recognition Workgroup and reported that he had spoken with the Administrative Judges regarding the Connecticut Law Tribune pro bono reception which will honor identified attorneys in each Judicial District for their pro bono service. Judge Bright also reported that the Judicial Branch is sponsoring a recognition reception on November 5th with Justice Rogers in New Haven for the foreclosure volunteer attorneys in the New Haven and Bridgeport Judicial Districts.

Judge Bright also provided an update on the A/B pro bono Committee lists in Tolland. These lists represent attorneys who have done pro bono work (A list) and attorneys who have not (B list). A letter will be sent to all those on the lists inquiring if they would like to remain on the list and if so, the attorneys must report their pro bono contributions. For every one Committee assignment made from the B list, two are made from the A list in order to incentivize attorneys to engage in pro bono work.

Attorney Nordstrom was not able to attend the meeting, however, he submitted a progress report on the status of the In-House Workgroup. A meeting was held this summer and the Workgroup discussed possible ways to increase in-house pro bono involvement, including the following:

- Attorney Nordstrom appeared at a Westfaca Board meeting to gain the organization's support for spreading the word about in-house authorization to undertake pro bono work. He will be working with the Pro Bono Partnership to create an e-mail blast and flyers to be available at Westfaca events.

- Attorney Nordstrom has also been in contact with Connacca and was invited to attend their next meeting.
- The Workgroup believes that New York's rule change allows Authorized House Counsel to undertake pro bono work pro se (Virginia/Colorado model). The Workgroup should consider if and when to seek a similar rule change for Connecticut In-house lawyers.
- Finally, General Electric and United Technologies Corporation have collaborated to create 3 Fellow positions, one for each Legal Aid organization. This effort should get off the ground in 2014 and will seek financial support from other large Connecticut-based corporations.

Attorney Nofi-Bendici reported that the Law Schools Workgroup was still in the process of information gathering and would be setting up another meeting in the near future.

Attorney Dubois reported on behalf of the Rules Workgroup that he will review RPC 6.5 as stated in the minutes of the previous meeting. Further, Attorney Dubois reported that the pro bono requirements should be the same for in-house attorneys as for any other Connecticut attorney – a newly admitted Connecticut attorney is not necessarily in a better position to provide pro bono legal assistance than an experienced in-house attorney who is not admitted in Connecticut. It seemed incongruous that the latter attorney requires the supervision of an admitted Connecticut attorney, while the former, just by virtue of their bar admission, does not.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein added that from the service-side, the goal is always “do no harm” and reasonably ensure that the pro bono assistance provided does not put a low income person in a worse, more precarious situation.

Attorney Shapiro reported that the Follow-Up Summit Workgroup had its next meeting on October 30, 2013 to discuss the plans thus far for the 2014 Summit and finalize the agenda and format of the event. Attorney Shapiro reported that in response to the email from Justice Rogers and the Save the Date, the names of approximately 35 rising stars had been provided by the general counsels and managing partners as attendees for the Summit. Judge Bright instructed staff to send the email and the Save the Date to the Pro Bono Committee.

6. Judge Bright inquired if any Committee members had any ideas for pro bono opportunities for attorneys. Attorneys Eppler-Epstein and Clendenen provided a brief update on the emeritus small claims Volunteer Attorney Program in Hartford including the expansion sites under consideration (New Haven, Waterbury, Bridgeport and Manchester). In addition, Attorney Clendenen reported that Attorney Kimberly Knox, President of the CBA mailed a letter to approximately

- 200 identified retired attorneys informing them of the small claims pro bono opportunity.
7. Judge Bright informed the Committee that due to the meeting schedules of the individual Workgroups, the Pro Bono Committee as a whole would only meet every 2 or 3 months. As the May 14, 2014 date of the Summit approached, it might become necessary to meet more often.
 8. Judge Bright informed the Committee that Attorney Sia would be working with Attorney Jonathan Weiner at the Connecticut Supreme Court to review Judicial Branch Administrative Policy 605 which strictly governs the circumstances under which Judicial Branch employees may perform pro bono work.
 9. The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be held on January 9, 2014 at 2:30p.m.
 10. The meeting was adjourned at 3:50p.m.