

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
August 17, 2011

The Pro Bono Committee met on Wednesday, August 17, 2011, at 2:30pm in the Attorney's Conference Room, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon William Bright, Chair, Attorney Timothy Johnston, Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein, Attorney Norman Janes, Attorney Livia Barndollar, Attorney Gregg Benson, Attorney Jeffrey Eglash, Attorney Ed Heath, Attorney Jan Chiaretto, Attorney Barry Hawkins, Attorney Dwight Merriam, Attorney Alfred Casella and Attorney Mark Nordstrom.

The meeting was called to order at 2:33 pm.

1. The Committee voted to unanimously approve the minutes of the July 7, 2011 meeting.
2. Judge Bright reported to the Committee that all of the invited speakers for the Summit have been confirmed and to date, 58 affirmative responses had been received. A reminder will be emailed to the invitees who have not yet responded to the invitation.

Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein reported to the Committee on the progress of the pro bono catalog. The catalog will be designed by the Judicial Branch graphic designer and will be emailed to all of the Summit invitees in advance of the event. Additional hard copies will be printed and made available to the attendees on the day of the Summit along with the participant sign up sheet with the contact information for each pro bono program.

A discussion was held regarding the importance of encouraging the representatives from the large firms to act as a resource for volunteers from small or solo firms to give guidance or assistance on complicated legal matters. A suggestion was made to include a question on the form which lists the available pro bono opportunities that asks volunteers if they would be willing to act as a resource in a specific area or specialization of the law.

In addition, the pro bono portal will be finalized in time for the Summit. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to include a quote from Chief Justice Rogers on the importance of pro bono service on the home page of the portal. A demonstration of the website will be provided at the next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee to review the website and check for any glitches.

Judge Bright asked the Committee members for volunteers to be coordinators to work with each of the three panels (judges, in-house attorneys and large firms) to develop questions and gather research. The volunteer coordinator assignments are as follows:

In-House - Mark Nordstrom – Primary contact
Gregg Benson

Firms - Ed Heath – Primary contact
Tim Johnston

Judges - Judge Bright – Primary contact
Norman Janes

The coordinators will contact their respective panelists and set up phone conferences to prepare for the panel discussions and provide support. The coordinators will also reach out to the panelists and to some of the attendees to promote the interactive nature of the Summit. The focus of the panel discussions should be more on the audience questions than the individual panelist presentations. To this end, the coordinators will obtain a list of potential questions from the panelists and from some attendees. These proposed questions will be submitted to Judge Bright ahead of time for his input. The Committee also discussed the possibility of having a staff person circulating through the audience to collect questions and pass them to the moderator.

Judge Bright relayed to the Committee members that Governor Malloy will be speaking at the lunch portion of the program in the Old Judiciary Hearing Room and the legal service providers will be available to talk to attendees about the availability of the various pro bono opportunities.

A discussion was held about the pro bono catalog and the need for the catalog to expressly state the income levels that each program serves. The Committee agreed that the poverty threshold of 125% may be confusing and should be clarified.

Judge Bright reported that he and Attorney Mohan met with FOIC regarding the issue of mandatory reporting of pro bono work on the annual electronic attorney registration. Judge Bright understands that if the pro bono service is reported electronically as part of the attorney registration process, and the information is not available because it's not linked or stored anywhere, it may not be subject to FOIA.

3. The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be held on Wednesday, September 14, 2011 at 2:30p.m.
4. The meeting was adjourned at 3:26p.m.