

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
February 16, 2011

The Pro Bono Committee met on Wednesday, February 16, 2011, at 2:00pm in the Attorney's Conference Room, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon William Bright, Chair, Attorney Edward Heath, Attorney Alfred Casella, Attorney Gregg Benson, Hon. Brian Mahon, Attorney Jeffrey Eglash, Attorney Timothy Johnston, Attorney Amy Haberman, Attorney Janice Chiaretto, Attorney Barry Hawkins, Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein and Attorney Dwight Merriam.

Meeting was called to order at 2:02 pm.

1. Judge Bright welcomed all of the Pro Bono Committee members and thanked them for their willingness to participate on the Committee. Judge Bright presented an overview of the Committee's charge and discussed planning the Pro Bono Summit.

A discussion was held regarding Pfizer's Pro Bono launch on Friday, February 4, 2011 which Judge Bright attended. Attorney Benson explained that Pfizer, in collaboration with Connecticut Legal Services hopes that their Pro Bono launch will serve as a model for other in-house departments who wish to develop pro bono programs. Pfizer's launch was successful in signing up 15 pro bono attorneys who received training from Connecticut Legal Services to field consumer calls regarding issues concerning the elderly.

Judge Bright reported that an informational meeting was held earlier in the day with Chief Justice Rogers regarding the Judicial Branch's newly formed Access to Justice Commission. Judge Bright noted that as a result of the formation of the Public Service and Trust Commission in 2007 and the subsequent implementation of the Strategic Plan, the Branch was well ahead of many other states with existing Access to Justice Commissions. Judge Bright reported that the Access to Justice Commission will be chaired by Judge Raymond Norko and will consist of two subcommittees; the Pro Bono Committee and the Self-represented Parties Workgroup. Judge Bright invited the members of the Pro Bono Committee to contact him if they wished to become members of the Access to Justice Commission.

Judge Bright also reported to the Committee that he will be attending a Pro Bono initiative in Washington D.C. on March 4, 2011 where he will be facilitating a discussion on the crisis in our courts concerning the growing numbers of self-represented parties and the lack of qualified pro bono attorneys. Judge Bright will report back to the Committee about his experience and will present any relevant information he obtains in Washington to the Pro Bono Committee at their March meeting.

2. Pro Bono Summit – Judge Bright asked the Committee members for their input regarding the timing of the Pro Bono Summit and whether it might be more practical to hold the Summit in September 2011 rather than in June. A discussion was held regarding the goals of the Pro Bono Summit and the Committee agreed that the goal was to focus on and present concrete pro bono programs that were ready to be implemented and presented to the attorneys who attended the Summit. As a result, the Committee agreed that the Pro Bono Summit should take place in September 2011.

Judge Bright shared that attendance at the Pro Bono Summit would be by invitation of the Chief Justice. He envisioned a group of between 100-150 attorneys that would be invited to attend the Summit who would also commit to undertaking pro bono work in some capacity.

A brief discussion was held regarding establishing an automated phone system that was staffed by pro bono attorneys. The automated system would prompt callers to dial a number based on which area of the law they needed advice in (e.g. press “1” for housing, press “2” for foreclosure, etc). The issue was also raised as to whether the Court Service Centers and Public Information Desks can participate in the pro bono programs. Judge Bright suggested that the Committee discuss this at the next meeting.

3. Formation of Subcommittees – Judge Bright proposed the formation of the following six (6) subcommittees:
 - **Communication** – matching needs with resources
 - **Training** – providing education to ensure that the attorneys are comfortable providing the needed pro bono services.
 - **Metrics** – measuring the success of the pro bono efforts
 - **Recognition** – highlighting and rewarding pro bono efforts and results.
 - **Recruitment** – finding and engaging more members of the bar
 - **Logistics** – planning the details of the Pro Bono Summit

A brief discussion was held regarding each of the subcommittees and Judge Bright asked the Committee if there were any suggestions for the formation of additional subcommittees. A suggestion was made to form a subcommittee for “Programs” to create and develop the specific pro bono programs and also serve to help reduce any costs to the attorneys who participate.

An additional discussion was held regarding current procedures in some Judicial District locations where attorneys who perform pro bono work are placed on a preferential or “A” list for Committee work in foreclosure.

Judge Bright asked the Committee members to email Krista Hess with their preferences for subcommittee assignments and to also give some thought to whether the Pro Bono

Summit should be a ½ or whole day and whether the group should remain together or divide up into break-out sessions.

4. The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2011 at 2:00p.m. at 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford in the Attorney's Conference Room.
5. The meeting was adjourned at 3:22p.m.