

Pro Bono Committee
Recognition Workgroup
February 4, 2015
10:00 a.m.
225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT
Teleconference

1. The teleconference meeting of the Recognition Workgroup was called to order at 10:05 a.m. The following members were in attendance: Attorney Dwight Merriam, Chair, Attorney Sylvia Rutkowska and Attorney Norman Janes.
2. The minutes from the November 18, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.
3. The Workgroup had a general discussion about the different components of a pro bono pledge including number of pro bono hours, developing a standard for converting pro bono hours into dollars, and pro-rating for part-time attorneys who do pro bono.

The Workgroup had an in-depth discussion about the YLS Million Dollar pledge and how the success of that program might serve as a blueprint for future pro bono pledges. The Workgroup ultimately agreed that the pledge should include tiered goals of pro bono hours, measured by the number of hours per person per year in full-time equivalents (FTE). The recognition would be given to those firms/corporations who performed more than 25 and more than 50 hours of pro bono service in a given year. In addition, the top three firms which distinguished themselves with the highest number of pro bono hours per lawyer would also receive recognition.

4. The Workgroup also agreed that for purposes of the 25 or 50 hour pro bono pledge, a “firm” /”organization” would be defined and include the following categories: solos, small, medium and large firms, Connecticut corporations of all sizes, governmental agencies, non-profits, and inactive and retired attorneys.

There will be three categories of recognition based on the number of hours. If an organization performed 25-49.9 hours of pro bono during the year, it would be given a pro bono service award. 50+ hours of pro bono service in a year would earn a pro bono distinguished service award and the top three organizations in terms of average pro bono hours per lawyer, (including solos, organizations, corporations, large firms, etc.) would receive an additional recognition/award. Additionally, the Judicial Branch will provide certificates for the estimated 40-50 organizations expected to qualify for recognition and individual lawyers in these organizations will be given individual certificates if their organization qualifies for a distinguished service award.

The Workgroup also discussed recognizing pro bono service through cash contributions as permitted under RPC 6.1, “A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by providing professional services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations, by service in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession, **and by financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.**” It was agreed that up to 25% of

the pro bono hours may be “purchased” by making financial contributions to legal aid organizations

Several ideas were discussed regarding appropriate forms of recognition for distinguished pro bono service including plaques, certificates, pins, and website logos. The Workgroup discussed having a perpetual trophy engraved with the names of the top three organizations who have distinguished themselves through pro bono service. The trophy would be displayed in the foyer of the Supreme Court. The Workgroup also discussed other benefits such as parking, luncheons and a formal recognition ceremony by the Supreme Court, as well as the Connecticut Law Tribune’s annual awards event in the spring.

The Judicial Branch will announce the program through press releases and other announcements through the Connecticut Bar Association, affinity bar groups, county bar associations, Connecticut Bar Foundation and the Connecticut Law Tribune would also be utilized.

In addition, the Workgroup envisions that participating firms and entities will self-report their pro bono hours utilizing the template that YLS created for their “1 Million pro bono service” campaign. It is contemplated that the Judicial Branch will take responsibility for collecting and tracking the pro bono hours that are reported.

5. The meeting was adjourned at 10:58a.m.