

Pro Bono Committee  
Recognition Workgroup  
November 18, 2014  
10:00 a.m.  
225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT  
Room 206

1. The teleconference meeting of the Recognition Workgroup was called to order at 10:02 a.m. The following members were in attendance: Attorney Dwight Merriam, Chair, Attorney Edward Heath, and Attorney Sylvia Rutkowska.
2. The Workgroup discussed the “40-at-50” model of pro bono that has worked successfully in Washington, D.C. This model recognizes those firms where at least 40% of the attorneys perform 50 or more pro bono hours during the prior year. The Workgroup discussed whether this model was a good fit for Connecticut and how it could be adapted to encourage both large firm, small firm, and sole practitioners to do pro bono work. One of the positive features of the “40-at-50” model is that the model may serve to stimulate competition among law firms and corporations and spur interest in pro bono service.
3. The Workgroup discussed the specific components of the YLS “\$1 Million Pro Bono Service Campaign” which was undertaken in collaboration with the Pro Bono Network. The campaign set a goal of increasing pro bono service and awareness throughout the state by facilitating the performance of \$1 million worth of pro bono services from March 2013 to May 2013. The campaign surpassed its goal and provided over \$2 million dollars’ worth of pro bono service. The following award categories were established for the campaign including:
  - Most Hours Overall
  - Most Hours for Mid-size Firm (8-30 lawyers)
  - Most Hours for a Small Firm (2-7 lawyers)
  - Most Hours by Individual/Solo Practitioner
  - \$250,000 Club (Firms with more than \$250,000 worth of pro bono services performed)
  - \$200,000 Club (Firms with more than \$200,000 worth of pro bono services performed)
  - \$150,000 Club (Firms with more than \$150,000 worth of pro bono services performed)
  - \$10,000 Club (Individuals with 40+ hours of pro bono services performed)
  - Highest Percentage of Attorney Participation
    - Small Firms with 100% Participation
    - Mid-size Firm
    - Large Firm
    - Highest Number of Hours Per Attorney in a Firm

The Workgroup discussed the logistics of undertaking a program like the YLS \$1 Million Pro Bono Service Campaign and which entity would be responsible for collecting, organizing and reporting on the pro bono data.

4. The workgroup also discussed different pro bono recognition efforts that have been undertaken in Connecticut including the Connecticut Law Tribune Honors Night earlier this year which featured stories on 13 Connecticut attorneys; one from each Judicial District, who were nominated for their contributions and outstanding pro bono efforts during the prior year. Each attorney was nominated by the Administrative Judge in their Judicial District location where the pro bono work was performed, and in addition to a feature story on their pro bono service, the Tribune also honored the attorneys at a formal recognition dinner. The Workgroup agreed that this type of recognition by the judges was very meaningful to attorneys, as was the presentation of a plaque or logo that could be displayed by the recipient of the pro bono award.

In thinking about the need for uniform pro bono recognition across the state, the Workgroup was mindful to structure a recognition initiative that was not “one size fits all”. Instead, there was a strong inclination to consider the entire legal culture of small, medium, and large law firms, solo practitioners and corporate attorneys. Towards this end, the Workgroup discussed the possibility of organizing a formal ceremony where the presiding or administrative judge who nominated an attorney for his or her outstanding contributions to pro bono would attend a dinner and speak for a minute to two about the attorney and why they’re receiving the honors. In addition, the judge would present the attorney with a plaque and or photos would be taken to memorialize the event. Everyone felt that the ability of an attorney to point to an award or a photo of the judge and the attorney receiving the award was of great value and would help to bolster pro bono participation. The Workgroup also agreed that a formal recognition ceremony would work best if it was held annually perhaps in the early spring or late winter. Workgroup staff will research, through the ABA, pro bono recognition initiatives undertaken by other states.

A discussion was also had about the possibility of creating a pro bono logo for individual attorneys and firms to display on their website and letterhead.

5. The Workgroup meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.