

Pro Bono—the Best of the Good



Frank O. Brown, Jr. 2001–2002 Senior Lawyers Conference Chair

In 1840, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: “When an American asks for the cooperation of his fellow citizens, it is seldom refused; and I have often seen it afforded spontaneously, and with great goodwill . . . if some great and sudden calamity befalls a family, the purses of a thousand strangers are at once willingly opened and small but numerous donations pour in to relieve their distress.” These words are as true today as they were over a century and a half ago when de Tocqueville wrote them in Chapter IV of Volume II of his famous work, *Democracy In America*.

The unspeakable acts of September 11, 2001, are seared in our individual memories and in our national psyche, but there are greater and more enduring memories. Those are the memories of the individual and collective acts of courage and generosity on the part of the American people, who have given of themselves, their money, their time and their skills to help those who suffer from these sudden calamities.

We have seen the heroic and unselfish efforts of firefighters, emergency medical crew members and police; people from all walks of life have stepped forward to help—in person, by telephone, by mail and over the internet. Among those who have stepped forward are lawyers. Through our individual efforts and through the organized efforts of the bar, we have once again demonstrated our dedication to serving the public good. Lawyers who have been trained by the Virginia State Bar’s Young Lawyers Conference for the Emergency Legal Services Program, using advance training specific to disaster-related legal needs, have volunteered. The effectiveness of this program depends upon an adequate supply of trained volunteers throughout the state, and more volunteers are needed. Some are called upon now, and others will be called upon in the future.

Lawyers have made financial contributions to various charitable and relief organizations. Also, lawyers have volunteered through the Virginia State Bar home page at www.vsb.org, which provides links to other volunteer opportunities for lawyers’ pro bono services, including being available as back-up attorneys to help military service personnel when their legal assistance offices are overloaded.

In addition to providing pro bono services through an organized program or legal aid society, many of us provide those services on an ongoing basis, as a regular part of our law practices, by furnishing services to those in need, either free of charge or at a substantially reduced fee. Lawyers of all ages, and particularly senior lawyers, with our considerable knowledge, expertise, judgment and experience, are providing pro bono services on a daily basis, and more volunteers are always needed. If you are currently providing pro bono services, please accept this thanks on behalf of a grateful public and bar. If you wish to volunteer, please do so in your own private way, or visit the Virginia State Bar home page to make an organized connection. Thank you. ☺

Attention—Senior Lawyers!

Membership in the Senior Lawyers Conference is automatic for all members in good standing of the Virginia State Bar who are 55 years of age and older. No conference dues are required. One of the benefits of the Senior Lawyers Conference is our home page at www.vsb.org/slc. Our conference newsletter is published on the site, and there are numerous publications of interest to senior lawyers online. Also, the site contains valuable links to other sites, which will be of help to you and your clients. Please tell other senior lawyers about the site. Most of us have access to the Internet at home or at the office, but if you have neither, ask a friend to download items of interest to you, or visit your local library for free public access to the Internet. There was a questionnaire for senior lawyers in the October issue of *Virginia Lawyer*. It is also available on the Web site. Please complete it and send it in, so that we know your interests and are better able to serve you. Thank you.