

Celebrate! October Is Pro Bono Month

October 23–28, 2017, marks the ninth annual National Celebration of Pro Bono. The American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service established the weeklong celebration to develop a “nationally coordinated strategy for recognizing pro bono across the country” and to raise the profile of local pro bono projects during the timeframe.¹ In a letter dated October 30, 2009, recognizing the celebration, President Barack Obama wrote, “Pro bono lawyers work tirelessly to break down barriers to opportunity and justice, volunteering countless hours to provide critical legal services to our most vulnerable citizens.”²

Since its inception, 49 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Canada have held thousands of Celebrate Pro Bono events that “provide a format for showcasing the incredible difference that pro bono lawyers make to our nation, to our system of justice, to our communities, and, most of all, to the clients they serve.”³ The governors or judiciaries of a number of states, including Alabama,⁴ Massachusetts,⁵ Michigan,⁶ Missouri,⁷ Tennessee,⁸ Washington,⁹ and West Virginia,¹⁰ have issued “Pro Bono Week” or “Pro Bono Month” proclamations during October to bring attention to the importance of attorney pro bono.

In recent years, the VSB Access to Legal Services Committee has unofficially celebrated October as “Pro Bono Month” by hosting the Pro Bono Conference, offering free pro bono trainings, and recognizing outstanding pro bono service by attorneys with the presentation of the Lewis F. Powell Jr. Pro Bono Award. In 2016, the committee established the Frankie Muse Freeman Organizational Pro Bono Award as a second means of recognizing exemplary pro bono service. This year, Governor Terry McAuliffe has issued a Certificate of Recognition that designates October as Pro Bono Month in Virginia.¹¹

In comments marking the 2017 National Celebration of Pro Bono, ABA



President Hilarie Bass urged “all bar associations, law firms, corporate legal departments, law schools and others to organize programs during the celebration that recognize the critical value of pro bono to our profession and to our communities” Furthermore, she encouraged all lawyers “to participate in

the celebration by volunteering for pro bono events that provide counsel, advice, and representation to low income individuals and the organizations that serve them.”¹²

A number of Virginia Pro Bono Month events are scheduled for October including:

- **Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia Pro Bono Celebration and Recognition Program**, Thursday, October 5, 2017, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m., Norfolk Circuit Court Rotunda, 150 St. Paul’s Boulevard, Norfolk. LASEVA will recognize its volunteers for their pro bono efforts and share updates about their access to justice programs. Justice S. Bernard Goodwyn, Supreme Court of Virginia, will provide comments, and light hors d’oeuvres and beverages will be served. For more information please contact Tameeka M. Williams, director of Pro Bono and Private Attorney Involvement. LASEVA, tameekaw@laseva.org. FREE but RSVP is required.
- **The Virginia State Bar Pro Bono Conference**, Wednesday, October 18, 2017, 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 990 Hilton Heights Road, Charlottesville. Program includes a business meeting of the VSB Special Committee on Access to Legal Services and Continuing Legal Education sessions on *Providing Pro Bono Representation to Justice-Involved Veterans; Basic Life Planning Documents; Simple Wills, Advanced Medical Directives and Powers of Attorney*; and *Update on JusticeServer 2.0*, and a Networking Reception with attendees of the Statewide Legal Aid Conference. <http://bit.ly/2xIUzhu>. FREE.
- **The Virginia State Bar Pro Bono Awards Dinner**, Wednesday, October 18, 2017, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 990 Hilton Heights Road, Charlottesville. The VSB will honor Fairfax immigration lawyer Ofelia Calderón, recipient of the 2017 Lewis F. Powell Jr. Pro Bono Award, and McGuireWoods LLP, recipient of the 2017 Frankie Muse Freeman Organizational Pro Bono Award. Anita Earls, executive director of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, will be the keynote speaker. <http://bit.ly/2y7mwRb>. \$20.00.
- **The Statewide Legal Aid Conference**, Wednesday, October 18, 2017, 1:30 p.m. – Friday, October 20, 2017, 12:45 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 990 Hilton Heights Road, Charlottesville. This educational conference is hosted

by Virginia Poverty Law Center and Virginia’s legal aid programs. This year’s event offers more than 30 educational sessions including more than 20 CLE sessions and is open to those outside Virginia’s legal aid community, including sessions for professionals in management, administrative staff, community advocates, and others, <http://bit.ly/2xE4pR8>. \$275.00 plus meals.

- **Pro Bono Webinar: The Nuts and Bolts of Handling Pro Bono Uncontested Divorce Cases**, Monday, October 23, 2017, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Many legal aid offices are overwhelmed with applications for assistance with uncontested divorces and are in need of pro bono lawyers to help with these cases. This FREE webinar is a collaboration among the VSB Special Committee on Access to Legal Services, the VSB Young Lawyers Conference, Legal Services of Northern Virginia, and Kelly, Byrnes & Danker PLLC, and will train attorneys to represent clients in uncontested divorce proceedings in any jurisdiction in Virginia. The CLE will cover both procedural and substantive aspects of these type of cases. <http://bit.ly/2fOqZNN>.
- **Greater Richmond Bar Foundation Triage Launch and Annual Pro Bono Celebration**, Wednesday, October 25, 2017, 3:00 – 8:00 p.m., McGuire Woods LLP, 800 East Canal Street, Richmond. This event will launch the GRBF Triage Project, the country’s first effort to create a second ring around legal aid, with private attorneys taking on all matters in twelve practice areas so that legal aid offices can concentrate their limited resources on core specialties. This event will include a plenary session on the Triage strategy and breakout CLE sessions covering the outsourced practice areas. The program concludes with a cocktail reception and presentation of the annual GRBF Benjamin Rice Lacy, IV Volunteer of the Year Award and the George H. Hettrick Leadership Award. Visit <http://bit.ly/2xvHad4>. FREE.
- **Stop the Violence/Attorney of the Day Pro Bono CLE**, Thursday, October 26, 2017, 12:30 – 4:30 p.m., Fairfax County Courthouse, 4110 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. Legal Services

of Northern Virginia celebrates the 10th Anniversary of its Attorney of the Day program with a luncheon and CLE program for attorneys providing pro bono legal assistance to protective order petitioners in cases involving intimate partner violence. <http://bit.ly/2wfgmco>. FREE.

Additionally, several organizations as well as state, local, and specialty bar associations will be hosting pro bono service projects and other events to encourage and support attorney pro bono and access to justice in Virginia. Please visit the Virginia State Bar Access to Legal Services Facebook page for up-to-date information about Pro Bono Celebration events in Virginia, <http://bit.ly/2wUMFNO> or the events page on the Celebrate Pro Bono website, <http://bit.ly/2hxmLKu>.

Endnotes:

- 1 Overview of the National Celebration of Pro Bono, <https://www.probono.net/celebrateprobono/events/location.2017-10-01>
- 2 About the National Pro Bono Celebration, <https://www.probono.net/celebrateprobono/about/>
- 3 *Id.*
- 4 <https://www.alabar.org/assets/uploads/2016/09/Pro-Bono-Month-Proclamation-2016-Locals.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.mass.gov/governor/constituent-services/recognition/issued-proclamations/2016/pro-bono-month.html>
- 6 http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57577_59874_75291-394689--,00.html
- 7 <http://www.mobar.org/pdf/pro-bono-proclamation.pdf>
- 8 http://www.tba.org/sites/default/files/proclamation_2011.pdf
- 9 <http://www.courts.wa.gov/content/WSBA%20pro%20bono%20week%20proclamation.pdf>
- 10 http://www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/access-to-justice/Pro_Bono_Week_Proclamation.pdf
- 11 <http://governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/proclamations/proclamation/2017-pro-bono-month/>
- 12 ABA President Hilarie Bass welcomes you to the National Celebration of Pro Bono!, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSPwlfqTMOM&feature=youtu.be>