



The Supreme Court of Texas

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October 30, 2009

Dear Texas Attorney:

The American Bar Association has designated October 25–31, 2009 as the first National Pro Bono Week Celebration to recognize the valuable pro bono contributions made by lawyers throughout the year, and to increase pro bono participation across the country. We commend Texas attorneys for their ongoing pro bono contributions and take this opportunity to remind all attorneys that by engaging in pro bono work, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of all Texans who would not otherwise have access to the legal system. We urge every Texas lawyer to respond to the call set forth by the American Bar Association and offer the pro bono service desperately necessary to meet the civil legal needs of indigent Texans.

The need for legal aid has burgeoned during these economically challenging times just as IOLTA revenue has been devastatingly depleted. Legal services programs already working with limited resources have been further overwhelmed by the increase in requests for legal assistance. As a result, programs providing basic civil legal services to the poor are struggling to meet an ever-increasing-demand with limited resources. Pro bono attorneys are needed to fill the increasing justice gap.

Pro bono attorneys help ensure that the 5.1 million poor and low-income Texans who cannot afford basic civil legal services have access to our courthouses. Currently, legal aid programs serving low-income clients are only able to meet the needs of 1 in 5 indigent clients requesting legal assistance. As more people seek guidance with navigating the complexities of the legal process, we rely on pro bono volunteers to use their legal skills to help indigent clients vindicate their legal rights and obtain the justice they deserve – whether in helping clients secure protective orders to prevent further abuse, obtain benefits for their families, or address residential eviction issues.

We take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of Texas attorneys already engaging in pro bono and encourage you to be even more generous this year to help meet the increased demand for civil legal services. We also call on Texas attorneys who have not yet contributed to accept our call for pro bono service.

It is critically important for our profession to lead the way in bringing attention to this tremendous societal need. We urge Texas attorneys to participate by taking a pro bono case so that access to justice can become a reality for all Texans. The contributions and unwavering dedication of pro bono attorneys are truly a testament

to our great profession. By participating as a pro bono attorney, you demonstrate the very best in our profession and help make our nation's pledge of "justice for all" a reality.

Sincerely,

Chief Justice Wallace B. Jefferson

Justice Nathan L. Hecht

Justice Harriet O'Neill

Justice Dale Wainwright

Justice David M. Medina

Justice Paul W. Green

Justice Phil Johnson

Justice Don R. Willett

Justice Eva M. Guzman