

## LEGAL SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC COMMITTEE PLAN FOR 2008-2009 YEAR

The goals for 2008-2009 are based upon the mission of the Legal Services to the Public Committee, that mission being to promote civil legal representation and assistance for the neediest among us in the Commonwealth. With the support of the PBA Pro Bono Office, the committee focuses on issues of concern to the Pennsylvania Legal Assistance Network and to private practice pro bono attorneys.

Coming into the new Bar year, there were two standing subcommittees of the Committee: Pro Bono Conference and Legislative. The legislative effort received a huge boost in May 2008 with the PBA Day on the Hill dedicated to legal aid issues. Sam Milkes worked closely with then PBA President Andy Susko on that event and there is talk that the event will be repeated in 2009. With the advent of new President C. Dale McClain's term, the former Committee on Loan Forgiveness was merged back into the Legal Services to the Public Committee and that will now stand as a formal subcommittee under the direction of Lou Rulli, Sam Cooper and Laura Ellsworth. This completes a cycle in which the loan issue started in the Committee, was moved to a Task Force, became a stand alone committee and is now back in the Legal Services to the Public fold. Over the years, there have also been task forces that have grown out of this Committee to address particular problems and issues. During the 2007-08 year, a Task Force on Legal Access was formed by then PBA President Andy Susko to explore the issues associated with implementing the mandate of the increased access to legal services resolution passed by the PBA in November 2007. That Task Force will work through the 2008-09 year.

The goals of the Committee, along with action steps and target dates, are as follows:

I. Promote Pro bono activities in the state and support pro bono attorneys (follow-up and implementation of the pro bono aspirational goal established by the PBA in 2007)

This has always been part of the committee's core mission but was given added weight last year by the PBA Resolution. As in any year, activities may include:

- Encouraging local bar associations to hold recognition events and inviting President Dale McClain to participate;
- Encouraging and supporting local pro bono training;
- Efforts to involve judges in the promotion and recognition of pro bono volunteers;
- and,
- Keeping current the list and description of pro bono programs across the state which is on the PBA website at <http://www.pabar.org/countyprobono.shtml>.

II. Plan and implement pro bono conference to be held at PBA statewide meeting  
*Action step for next Committee/Section meeting – Discuss membership of Pro bono conference subcommittee and the status of planning for Conference in Spring of 2009.*

III. Support Legal Services programs in PA

A. Support effort to maintain and increase government and private funding for legal Services; follow-up on Day on the Hill lobbying efforts from 2008 May event.

B. Participate in Loan Forgiveness implementation efforts to support legislation and other recommendations of the sunsetted Committee and former Task Force in the creation of a statewide Loan Repayment Assistance Program (this is now a subcommittee of the Committee).

IV. Increase Access to Justice By Promoting “Civil Gideon”, a right to counsel for the indigent in civil cases in Pennsylvania.

*Action Step for each Committee/Section meeting: Get update from Legal Access Task Force...*

V. Propose, advocate and support legislation benefiting those served by legal services and pro bono programs

In order to achieve this goal, the Committee has been working to develop a mechanism for looking for and reviewing proposed legislation which might impact, positively or negatively, on low-income people and victims of domestic violence in PA. The Committee has also been working to develop a process that would enable the Committee, in concert with other PBA committees of sections where possible, to take a position for or against legislation.