

Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project Launched

At the March 5, 2003, meeting of the Dauphin County Bar Association (DCBA) Bankruptcy Section, newly-appointed Bankruptcy Judge Mary D. France emphasized the need for pro bono assistance.

She explained that from time to time, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court is faced with the problem of pro se debtors whose cases are too complex to be administered fairly and effectively without an attorney. Although these debtors' needs are serious and their resources limited, many of them are not eligible for legal services.

In the past, the court had attempted to steer these cases to counsel willing to handle them on a pro bono basis. However, there has not been any formal program to recruit the assistance of members of our bankruptcy bar who are willing to take on pro bono cases.

Through DCBA Bankruptcy Section Chair Robert Bein's leadership, the DCBA is working with Judge France to launch a new project to address that need. On March 19, 2003, we met with representatives of the bankruptcy bar and legal services in the region. In April, Bob presented our ideas to Judge France. Judge France liked the ideas and our project was launched.

Currently, we are developing a list of bankruptcy lawyers who are willing to accept pro bono referrals directly from Judge France. On May 12, 2003, we mailed a letter from Judge France describing the project to all bar association members in our county.

We also asked the other bar associations in the "lower-tier" counties (Adams, Centre, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Schuylkill, Snyder, Union and York counties) to distribute Judge France's letter to their members.

If you work in one of the lower tier counties and actively practice in the bankruptcy area, we urge you to complete and return the registration form (below).

Judge France will use the list to contact lawyers on a rotating basis and ask them to assist a debtor in need of a pro bono attorney. We do not anticipate that Judge France will need to use this list often. However, a large number of registrations will avoid placing a burden on those who step forward.

Judge France will periodically forward the names of the attorneys who accept referrals to their local bar associations so that the attorneys receive appropriate credit for their pro bono service.

We are implementing this new project on a trial basis. We look forward to attorney participation and feedback. Feel free to contact Robert Bein, 237-5544, or Sandy Ballard, 232-7536, if you have any questions or concerns.

Middle District Bankruptcy Court
2003 Pro Bono Roster

Attorney's Name: _____

Firm/Office Name: _____

Office Address: _____

Office telephone number: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

PA Supreme Court I.D. #: _____

Foreign languages? _____

I certify that I am in active legal practice, have professional liability insurance and am not currently the subject of formal disciplinary action.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return completed forms to:

Dauphin County Bar Association
213 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 232-7536
Fax: 234-4582