

LEGAL SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC COMMITTEE PLAN FOR 2007-2008 YEAR

The goals for 2007-2008 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.

There are currently two standing subcommittees of the Committee: Pro Bono Conference and Legislative. Over the years, there have also been task forces that have grown out of this Committee to address particular problems and issues. During the past few years, there was a task force working on developing a statewide school loan forgiveness and repayment assistance program. The task force was successful in having a resolution approved by the PBA Board of Governors and by the PBA House of Delegates in June 2006. There is now a Loan Forgiveness Implementation Committee that is moving forward in the creation of a functioning program. There was also an Access to Justice Pro Bono Working Group, which developed the Pro Bono resolution proposed by this Committee and passed by the PBA Board of Governors and House of Delegates in June 2007. There are several proposed sub-committees to work on specific items in our agenda for the coming 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

A. This is part of the committee's core mission. As in any year, activities may include:

- Encouraging local bar associations to hold recognition events and inviting President Susko 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>.

B. This year, we have a primary role to play in the implementation of the Pro Bono Resolution that was passed by the PBA Board of Governors and House of Delegates at the Annual Meeting in June 2007. Thus, activities will include coordinating our efforts with President Susko's plans for the coming year.

Action steps for August 3 meeting—President Susko will attend the meeting and lay out his plans for next steps. Committee members to identify tasks they can take and ways they can participate in moving forward.

In addition, ask members to look at the list of current pro bono programs and to formulate ideas about how to better promote pro bono activities and support pro bono attorneys in 07/08

II. Plan and implement pro bono conference to be held at PBA statewide meeting

Action step for August meeting – Discuss membership of Pro bono conference subcommittee and the status of planning for Conference in Spring of 2008.

III. Support Legal Services programs in PA

A. Support effort to maintain and increase government and private funding for legal services

Action Step for August meeting: Discuss proposed resolution in support of increased funding for civil legal aid. If agreed upon, create sub-committee to refine the resolution and move it forward to the Board of Governors' September 2007 meeting.

B. Participate in Loan Forgiveness Implementation Committee, support legislation and other recommendations of the Committee in the creation of a statewide Loan Repayment Assistance Program.

(Proposed bills have been introduced in both the PA House and Senate which would establish a statewide loan forgiveness and repayment assistance program. These bills have been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee and to the House Judiciary Committee. There is no action step to be taken on this item at this time. There will be new activity in the fall.)

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

Action Step for August meeting: Discuss proposed resolution in support of recognizing a right to counsel for indigent individuals in certain civil cases, along the lines of the ABA resolution. If agreed upon, create sub-committee to refine the resolution and move it forward to the Board of Governors' September 2007 meeting.

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.

Action step for August meeting: Report on activities to date. Recruit members for a subcommittee to review proposed legislation and bring appropriate items to the attention of the entire Committee for appropriate action.