Spring into Pro Bono Action

May 14, 2013

6 CLE Hours (4 substantive hours/two ethics hours)

DESCRIPTION:

Chief Justice Ronald Castille, PBA President Forest Myers (who became PBA President the week before the conference), and PBA Past President Tom Wilkinson have made the expansion of pro bono legal services to the poor a priority for 2013. We are excited that you have joined us for this statewide pro bono conference and CLE program sponsored by the PBA's Legal Services to the Public Committee in conjunction with PBI to see a variety of ways you might answer this call to service and fulfill our aspirational duty to render public interest legal service. Rule 6.1 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct addresses the lawyer's responsibility to participate in pro bono representation of those unable to pay for legal services. It states in full:

A lawyer should render public interest legal service. A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by providing professional services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations, by service in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession, and by financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Rule 6.1 does not create mandatory duties, such that a lawyer will be subject to discipline for failing to comply with them. Its inclusion in the Rules of Professional Conduct does, however, attest to the importance the profession places on this service as a part of the lawyer's ethical responsibilities.

Today's annual PBA/PBI Pro Bono Conference highlights pro bono activities that a private practice lawyer may easily engage in and spotlights developments in the delivery of legal services of interest to all who work to improve access to justice. The program is live from Philadelphia in the morning and live from Mechanicsburg in the afternoon. At every site where the program will be shown, the schedule is as follows:

Program

8:00 – 9:00 Networking Breakfast

Live from Philadelphia:

9:00 – 10:00 Our Pro Bono Ethic (Ethics)

9:00 – 9:20 The Chief Justice on Pro Bono

Chief Justice Ron Castille will kick off the conference with remarks on the ethical duties of lawyers to do pro bono work and the importance of civil legal aid.
9:20 – 10:00  Just Listening for Pro Bono and Civil Legal Aid Attorneys

Sharon Browning of Just Listening will then speak about awakening the heart of justice in each of us and in the justice system. She will explore the power of listening as an act of justice for individuals experiencing oppression and marginalization, but also for colleagues, co-workers, and everyone with whom we communicate. This ethics hour will examine ways pro bono and civil legal aid attorneys can make a difference through their interaction with the clients they seek to help.

10:00 – 10:15  Break

10:15 – 11:15  Breaking the Pipeline: From Youth Courts to Expungements

This session will feature two programs that offer pro bono opportunities and help to break the pipeline to prison. Moderated by Mary Pugh, Mike Lee will begin by showcasing the Criminal Record Expungement Project that helps remove impediments to jobs and more for those who have been caught up in the system and then the second half of this session will feature Physicians for Social Responsibility’s Keith Bailey, US Assistant Attorney Robert Reed and EducationWorks Gregg Volz discussing youth courts as a tool for keeping young people out of the system altogether.

11:15 – 11:30  Break

11:30 – 12:30  Immigration Law Pro Bono for the Non-Immigration Lawyer (Citizenship Day, DACA, and Immigration Reform)

This session will highlight developments in immigration law, especially the status of immigration reform, that will provide opportunities for pro bono service for both the veteran immigration lawyer and the non-immigration attorney. Featured is Citizenship Day, an annual opportunity for pro bono service that any lawyer can support. DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, will be discussed to emphasize how work in such areas requires immigration expertise. PBA Immigration Law Committee Co-Chairs Wendy Hess and Guerline Laurore will be joined by HIAS’ Judi Berstein-Baker for this exciting update on what is, and what may soon be, happening in this field.

12:30 – 1:00 Lunch

Live from Mechanicsburg:

1:00 – 2:00  Is Technology the Answer? (Ethics)

How can we provide more access to justice for those who are the neediest among us? That is the question underlying this session as representatives of pro bono (Dauphin County’s Sandy Ballard and Cumberland County’s Linda Cecconello) and legal aid (PLAN’s Sam Milkes and Hank Leone plus North Penn’s Vicki Coyle) programs review developments in technology from the revised palawhelp.org website to various Hot Docs forms that are creating new opportunities for client service. The private practice lawyers’ perspective on doing pro bono from his or her desk will be shared along with a push for everyone to join paprobono.net.

2:00 – 2:15  Break

2:15 – 3:15  Pro Bono Week 2013: Serving Those Who Serve

Newly installed PBA President Forest Myers, four days into his role as leader of the statewide bar, will kickoff this session about the PBA’s 2013 Pro Bono Week focus of serving those who serve, from first responders helped through Wills for Heroes to veterans helped through clinics and Vet Courts. WFH coordinators (Christina Fisher and Kevin Taccino) will showcase this program which has provided
nearly 11,000 first responders with estate documents since 2009. Wes Payne, Chair of the PBA’s Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, will highlight developments in providing access to justice for veterans along with Jeremiah Underhill who is developing a new clinic for veterans in Harrisburg and Susan Saidel, who heads the Widener Law School Veteran’s Clinic.

3:15 – 3:30  Break

3:30 – 4:30  Gideon 50 Years later: A Look at the Civil Side of the Right to Representation

March 18, 2013 brought the 50th anniversary of Gideon v. Wainwright which provided legal representation for criminal defendants facing the loss of freedom and May 7, 2013 brought the first of three state Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on access to justice. PBA Access to Justice Committee members Cynthia Stoltz, and Joseph Sullivan, members of the Civil Legal Justice Coalition honorarily chaired by the Chief Justice, will explore what Gideon means on the civil side of the justice system and provide an update on all that has been done to promote such access. Jim DeAngelo, a longtime champion of pro bono from Harrisburg, will wrap up the session.