The PBA is the voice for the legal profession on Capitol Hill in Harrisburg. PBA’s legislative staff has its fingers directly on the pulse of legislative issues, and if you need timely and thorough information about pending legislation, the PBA can be your top resource. Take advantage of this outstanding membership benefit and stay informed about legislative developments through this column or the legislative area on the PBA website at www.pabar.org.

Two Important Bills Supported by the PBA Advance

House Bill 25, sponsored by Rep. Glen Grell, adopts as Pennsylvania law the Revised Uniform Law on Notarial Acts. The bill provides minimum standards for all notarial acts and governs the recognition of notarizations across state and national lines. It covers and applies to all notarizations of both tangible and electronic records and harmonizes treatment of notarization of electronic records with the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act adopted in Pennsylvania in 1999, the federally enacted (2000) Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act and the Uniform Real Property Electronic Recording Act (Act 100 of 2012). HB 25 also addresses the misuse of the term notario público, a designation in Spanish-speaking countries that permits one to practice law and has been misused in Pennsylvania to enable the unauthorized practice of law. Those misusing the term notario público engage in fraudulent activities in communities where the residents are not familiar with American legal processes by passing themselves off as having the education, training and authority (which they do not have) to represent people before government agencies and to draft and render advice concerning legal documents. The bill outlaws the use of the term in Pennsylvania other than by attorneys. The bill passed the House 197-0 on May 7.

Senate Bill 304, sponsored by Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, completes the codification of the Nonprofit Corporation Law, updating the law and making it consistent with the Business Corporation Law while also enacting the Uniform Unincorporated Nonprofit Association Act. SB 304 passed the Senate 50-0 on May 6 and was then referred to the House Commerce Committee.

For a complete update on the status of all bills on which the PBA has a position, check the PBA Legislative Boxscore at www.pabar.org/public/legislative/Boxscore/bar_box.htm or contact the PBA Legislative Department at 800-932-0311.

Making a Difference

The Pennsylvania Bar News column that highlights Pennsylvania attorneys who make a difference in their communities by providing extraordinary pro bono service and/or other legal services in the public interest.

Michael B. Lee, Philadelphia

Solo practitioner Michael B. Lee is a co-founder and member of Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE), a non-profit legal aid organization that provides direct pro bono legal service, legal education workshops and advocates, according to Lee, “to help those most impacted by injustice become their own advocates for change.” The Criminal Record Expungement Project, C-REP, the first pro bono project of PLSE, is dedicated to working with the community to reduce the collateral consequences of criminal records.

Describe your pro bono work:
C-REP works for a more just approach to criminal recordkeeping and access to employment and public benefits. As the supervising attorney for C-REP, I have argued almost 3,000 expungement and partial-expungement petitions in the court of common pleas. I also conduct community events to educate the public and the legal community on the expungement process and to advocate for criminal record policy reform.

Why do you participate in pro bono?
The privilege of practicing law comes with a great responsibility centered on the role of law in preserving social justice and our social order. I believe our current social order is not just. I participate in pro bono service to promote social order from social justice.

How did you become involved?
In listening to the community, I and three other young attorneys realized a need to address the criminal and civil harms created by arrest records. An expungement is an empowering first step toward helping someone achieve independence and become a productive member of society.

Have your pro bono cases dealt with legal issues different from your regular practice?
No. I practice criminal defense.

What have been the personal rewards?
My reward is raising someone’s self-esteem by lowering the barriers he or she may face in obtaining meaningful access to employment, housing or benefits. An expungement hearing is often the first positive interaction someone may have with the government. It is very rewarding to see how uplifting that can be.