Remarks by

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PBA President

To a Luncheon Meeting of

The Berks County Bar Association

To Celebrate Pro Bono Week

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

The Abraham Lincoln Hotel

Reading, Pennsylvania
I am delighted to join lawyers and judges from Berks County and beyond to celebrate and recognize the BERKS PRO BONO TEAM, a partnership of local bar, the courts, private practice attorneys and legal aid professionals that makes the pro bono program in Berks County a model of access to justice. I am honored to join our former Pennsylvania Governor and United States Attorney General Dick Thornburgh in this program. Many of your know him from those roles but he just finished an important job as part of a Pro Bono Task Force convened by the Legal Services Corporation Board of Directors which was charged with identifying and recommending innovative ways to enhance pro bono throughout the country. And such service to the neediest among us is no anomaly for Dick Thornburgh—he was one of the incorporators of Neighborhood legal Services almost a half century ago in his Pittsburgh home—and he was back there earlier this fall seeking support for the funding of legal aid fellowships.

We are in the middle of Pennsylvania Pro Bono Week, proclaimed by Governor Corbett with resolutions affirming the importance of pro bono service from both houses of the General Assembly. There are nearly 70,000 attorneys licensed in Pennsylvania. Many give significant pro bono like those among us today. However, pro bono service cannot replace the work of fully funded legal aid offices. It is only within a well-supported legal aid program that there is a structure for organized pro bono service to make a difference. As funding for legal aid programming faces cuts in these hard economic times and the number of persons needing such service grows, the work of pro bono attorneys, here in Berks County and around the Commonwealth, provides access to justice for many who otherwise would be without legal representation.
Pennsylvania Chief Justice Castille wrote to all lawyers in the state and urged that we all take up at least one pro bono client representation each year, and we expect every member of the PBA House of Delegates and Board of Governors to meet that challenge. You clearly get it and understand the importance of service in this county and I am pleased to be honoring today one of your own for such service. The PBA is taking this opportunity to honor local attorney Amy B. Good-Ashman. Amy regularly accepts pro bono cases. She has accepted cases with very short deadlines where her help has made a huge difference for the client. Amy has also served on the task force that developed a Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program for the county. Her spirit reflects the long tradition of pro bono service and support for legal aid that is the hallmark of the Berks County Bar.

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