



## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

LARISA M. DINSMOOR

# Pro Bono Month and the OCBA's Mission to Assist the Community

This pro bono month, let's focus on how we can gain experience while doing good for the community. In 2010, the American Bar Association (ABA) established the last full week in October as National Pro Bono Week to raise awareness of pro bono needs and opportunities and to recognize lawyers who engage in pro bono work. Pro bono week is now the National Celebration of Pro Bono, as publicized by the ABA, and is recognized by local and national organizations.

The term *pro bono* comes from the Latin phrase *pro bono publico*, which means "for the public good." Now, more than ever, we need attorneys to work for the public good. The pandemic created an unprecedented demand for pro bono assistance and, with it, a special opportunity and obligation for OCBA members. The ABA recommends that each lawyer contribute at least fifty hours of pro bono service per year, which is approximately one week during the entire year.

OCBA lawyers have a long history of engaging in pro bono work. I do not have enough words (literally, I have only this one page) to write about all of our members who have taken on pro bono cases and changed lives and laws. However, to assist you and your colleagues in finding pro bono opportunities, the Pro Bono Committee created a "one-stop shop" searchable directory of pro bono opportunities. If you are interested in taking on a pro bono case, you can easily access a variety of opportunities through the OCBA Pro Bono web directory, which gives you the ability to search by area of practice or organization. You can find the directory under "Public Services" and then "Pro Bono" or via this URL: <https://www.ocbar.org/Public-Services/Pro-Bono/Pro-Bono-Directory>. The OCBA Pro Bono Committee has confirmed that all of the organizations in the directory meet certain requirements, including that the organization: (1) is structured as either a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) organization; (2) has been in existence for more than three years; and (3) has not been the subject of any federal or state disciplinary actions in the last three years. However, the Committee does encourage everyone to exercise their own due diligence when engaging in pro bono work.


Soon to be added to this list of volunteer opportunities is the Pro Bono Committee's partnership with Community Legal Aid SoCal to assist the Orange County Collaborative Courts. Our collaborative or "problem solving" courts are specialized courts that take a holistic approach in addressing underlying issues that have led people into the criminal justice system. A few examples of these courts

include Drug Court, Homeless Outreach, Recovery Court, Veterans Court, and Young Adult Court. Many of these court participants have underlying civil matters that are holding them back from reintegrating into society and becoming whole again. (You can read more about these courts in the interview with Judge Delaney in this issue.) The Pro Bono Committee has a memorandum of understanding with Community Legal Aid SoCal to take collaborative court participants' civil matters that do not qualify for assistance from CLA SoCal. As such, OCBA members will be able to make an enormous difference in a person's life and the criminal justice system. Stay tuned for a training on how to become a pro bono attorney for the Collaborative Courts.

Another way to celebrate and promote pro bono month is to encourage your law firm to join the Pro Bono 20/20 Challenge. The challenge encourages law firms to have at least 20% of their lawyers provide at least twenty hours of pro bono service each year. The Pro Bono Committee will host this friendly competition and recognize law firms that have met or exceeded the goal. Game on for a great cause!

To learn more about pro bono opportunities in the OCBA, please attend our annual Volunteer Recognition Reception. This event is complimentary to everyone who has donated their time to the OCBA, and an easy way to meet volunteers and hear about their experiences. This year, the event will be held in person on October 5, 2021, at the Promenade and Gardens by Turnip Rose in Costa Mesa. I look forward to seeing you there.

If you cannot find the time to take a pro bono case, I encourage you to make a donation to the OCBA Charitable Fund or attend the Charitable Fund Gala on October 28, 2021, at the Newport Beach Country Club. This event raises money for many local organizations that do pro bono work in our community.

Let us all remember the famous quote by Winston Churchill: "You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give." Let us foster more connection, community, and unity during Pro Bono Month. For more information about the Pro Bono Committee and its opportunities, please contact co-chairs Lee Fink at [Lee@BrowerLaw-Group.com](mailto:Lee@BrowerLaw-Group.com) and Jared De Jong at [jdj@paynefears.com](mailto:jdj@paynefears.com). 

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