



Colorado Justice: Celebrating 40 years of fair
and impartial courts through merit selection

news

Colorado Judicial Branch
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Colorado lawyers recognized for achieving goal of Colorado Supreme Court's Pro Bono Commitment Program

Pro Bono commitment and achievement by state's attorneys doubled in the last year

DENVER, Colo. -- The Colorado Supreme Court today announced that 75 law firms, solo practitioners, and in-house counsel groups achieved the annual goal of providing 50 hours of pro bono legal services per lawyer, on average, primarily for indigent persons or organizations that serve indigent persons in 2007. In total, the number of firms, solo practitioners, and in-house counsel groups committed to the program and achieving the goal doubled from last year.

“This group of attorneys should be proud of their commitment to pro bono legal services; I know the court is proud of them for it,” said Colorado Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey. “Most of us who chose the law as a profession did so in the interest of helping people. Taking the time to do pro bono work is a very important way of providing that help.”

After the introduction of the program last year, with the help of attorneys and members of the Access to Justice Commission, Justice Gregory Hobbs spent numerous hours personally calling upon firms and solo practitioners, urging them to make a commitment to the program.

“This program has been a success since its inception last year and this year the program grew exponentially,” said Justice Hobbs. “More than 80 percent of the participating firms achieved the 50-hour goal in 2006 and 84 percent did so in 2007. Additionally, no firm, including those who did not meet the goal in 2006 or 2007, dropped its commitment to participate. In fact, we added 47 firms to bring the number of firms participating to 89.”

The pro bono commitment program was created to obtain an enduring commitment to providing free legal service to indigent persons in civil matters and organizations serving the indigent. The Supreme Court annually recognizes law firms, solo practitioners, and in-house counsel groups who voluntarily perform, on average, 50 hours of pro bono legal service per lawyer per year primarily for the indigent or organizations that serve the indigent. Participating

firms, or solo practitioners, have until February 15 each calendar year to advise the court whether they met the goal the prior year. The pro bono commitment program falls under the Colorado Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1.

According to a January 2008 report from the Colorado Access to Justice Commission, it is estimated that only 20 percent of indigent people who need civil legal help will receive some legal assistance. Colorado ranks 40th in state funding for civil legal services for the indigent, and would need to provide \$1.82 million more in state funds to reach the national average, according to the report (<http://www.cobar.org/repository/Access%20to%20Justice/08ATJReport.pdf>).

“I sincerely hope this program will continue to grow and fulfill a very important community need,” said Justice Hobbs. “The legal profession is making great progress and I am confident every hour contributed is very much appreciated by our most vulnerable Colorado residents. However, we still have a great deal of work to do. I hope many more firms, solo practitioners, and in-house counsel groups will participate in the coming years.

A reception will be held Monday, May 5, at 3 p.m. in the Colorado Supreme Court courtroom on the fifth floor of the Colorado Judicial Department building at 2 East 14th Ave. Chief Justice Mullarkey will honor those firms, solo practitioners, and in-house counsel groups that have committed to the 50-hour, on average, pro bono legal services goal. Members of the media are welcome to attend.

More information on the court’s pro bono commitment program, including a listing of participating law firms, solo practitioners, and in-house counsel groups is available on the Colorado Judicial Branch’s Web site at <http://www.courts.state.co.us/supct/probono.htm>.

Editor’s Note: Rule 6.1. (Voluntary Pro Bono Public Service) has been included below.

COLORADO COURT RULES: APPENDIX TO CHAPTERS 18-20 COLORADO RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT: PUBLIC SERVICE: Rule 6.1. Voluntary Pro Bono Public Service

A lawyer should aspire to render at least fifty (50) hours of pro bono public legal services per year. In fulfilling this responsibility, the lawyer should:

(a) provide a substantial majority of the fifty (50) hours of legal services without fee or expectation of fee to:

(1) persons of limited means or

(2) charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means; and

(b) provide any additional legal or public service through:

(1) delivery of legal services at no fee or a substantially reduced fee to individuals, groups or organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties or public rights, or charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters in furtherance of their organizational purposes, where the payment of standard legal fees would significantly deplete the organization's economic resources or would be otherwise inappropriate;

(2) delivery of legal services at a substantially reduced fee to persons of limited means; or

(3) participation in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession.

In addition, a lawyer should voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Where constitutional, statutory or regulatory restrictions prohibit government and public sector lawyers or judges from performing the pro bono services outlined in paragraphs (a)(1) and (2), those individuals should fulfill their pro bono responsibility by performing services or participating in activities outlined in paragraph (b).