



news

Colorado Judicial Branch
Mary J. Mullarkey, Chief Justice
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**Colorado Supreme Court recognizes achievements in
Pro Bono Commitment Program**
Thousands of hours of pro bono legal services provided

DENVER – Nearly 100 law firms, solo practitioners and in-house counsel groups around Colorado met an annual goal of providing an average of 50 hours of pro bono legal services per attorney in 2009, the Colorado Supreme Court announced today.

The 94 firms, solo practitioners and in-house counsel groups that completed the goal represent nearly triple the 34 that achieved the goal in 2006, the program's first year.

“The tremendous growth in this important program is heartening as we continue to see a growing need for access to justice for people who otherwise may not be able to afford legal representation,” said Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey. “It is a reflection that most of us who chose the law as a profession did so in the interest of helping people.”

For 2009, 120 law firms, solo practitioners and in-house counsel groups committed to providing an average of at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services per lawyer, primarily to indigent people or organizations serving the indigent. Ninety-four, or slightly more than 78 percent, met the goal. Last year, 109 such commitments were made, with 85 meeting the goal. In 2006, 42 firms, solo practitioners and in-house counsel groups committed to the program, with 34 meeting the goal.

The Pro Bono Commitment Program was created to secure an enduring commitment from Colorado's legal community to provide free legal services to indigent people in civil

matters and to annually recognize law firms, solo practitioners and in-house counsel groups who give generously of their time. Participants have until Feb. 15 each calendar year to advise the Supreme Court whether they met the goal for the prior year. The program is detailed in Rule 6.1 of the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct, encouraging every lawyer to aspire to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono public legal services per year.

“We hope this valuable program will continue to grow and fulfill a very important need,” said Justice Gregory Hobbs. “There still is a great deal of work to do to improve access to justice for Colorado’s most vulnerable residents.”

Also being recognized are eight Colorado banks for their role in maximizing resources for legal aid through interest rates paid on trust accounts. Those banks are Alpine Bank, Citywide Banks, FirstBank, First National Bank, Great Western Bank, UMB Bank, US Bank and Wells Fargo.

“Especially in these challenging times, we are grateful for our prime partners,” said Diana Poole, executive director of the Colorado Lawyer Trust Account Foundation. “Their generosity makes a real difference in improving access to justice.”

A reception is scheduled Friday, April 23, at 3:30 p.m., at the University of Denver’s Sturm College of Law, with Chief Justice Mullarkey presiding. The Supreme Court will honor those firms, solo practitioners and in-house counsel groups who met the 2009 Pro Bono Commitment Program goal, as well as those who are committed to working toward achieving the goal in 2010; and the eight partner banks.

More information, including a list of participants, is available on the Colorado Judicial Branch Web site at http://www.courts.state.co.us/Courts/Supreme_Court/Pro_Bono.cfm

Editor’s Note: Rule 6.1 (Voluntary Pro Bono Public Service) is reproduced below.

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COLORADO COURT RULES: APPENDIX TO CHAPTERS 18 TO 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).