

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

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Jessica Rosenbaum
Executive Director

December 17, 2010

Dear Law Firm Leader:

We are writing to ask that you join us as leaders in a critically important new initiative. District law firms have long been integral partners in ensuring access to justice for our city's most vulnerable residents. Through contributions of pro bono and financial support, District firms have provided vital resources to meet the civil legal needs of thousands of indigent District residents who cannot afford counsel. Despite this generous support, the justice gap in the District is widening further. The recession has had a severe impact on communities living in poverty and has affected all of the funding sources for the legal services network. Too many indigent individuals are being forced to navigate the courts alone, even when their very well-being is in jeopardy.

In response, the undersigned firms are joining with the D.C. Access to Justice Commission to launch *Raising the Bar in D.C.: A Funding Campaign for Legal Services*. The Campaign, which has been endorsed by the D.C. Bar and the D.C. Bar Foundation, urges District firms to pledge to meet one of three revenue-based giving levels in their annual donations to local legal services providers.

We hope you will join us in the Leadership Circle for the *Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign* by pledging to meet a benchmark level of giving to local legal services organizations in 2011. Similar campaigns in other jurisdictions have infused urgently needed resources into the legal services network. A fact sheet that explains the details of our initiative is enclosed.


These funds are crucial. A report released last year by the Access to Justice Commission and the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers found that legal services funding dropped an alarming 25% in 2009 alone, causing the network to lose approximately 12% of its attorneys and nearly 40% of critical non-attorney staff. By all indications this year will be worse. The loss in funding and staff coincided with a 20% increase in requests for representation. Even before the recession, the legal services network was able to meet only a fraction of the need in our community. The superb pro bono commitment of our law-firm community does not suffice. Increased financial support is essential.

As lawyers, we share a unique obligation to ensure equal access to justice. For most of us, this commitment is more than a matter of ethical obligation. We understand the perilous situation faced by indigent litigants who try to navigate the courts alone when their children, their homes or their jobs are on the line. As law firm leaders, we also understand the importance of visible leadership from the top management of firms in encouraging attorneys to support access to justice efforts.

With your leadership, we can reaffirm our community's commitment to ensuring that the unmet legal needs of the District's indigent communities are met. Your firm's generosity is more important than ever.



R. Bruce McLean
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP



Timothy C. Hester
Covington & Burling LLP



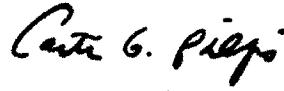
Kent Gardiner
Crowell & Moring LLP



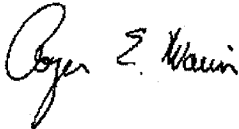
Frank M. Conner, III
DLA Piper LLP



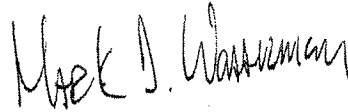
Paul M. Smith
Jenner & Block LLP



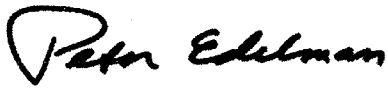
Carter G. Phillips
Sidley Austin LLP



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