



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012**



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OUR MISSION

The District of Columbia Court of Appeals, in an Order dated February 28, 2004, recognized the unmet civil legal needs of low and moderate income District residents and established the D.C. Access to Justice Commission. That Order, excerpted below, forms the Commission's mission:

[The] Court recognizes the importance of responding to the unmet legal needs of low and moderate income people in the District of Columbia and others who suffer disparate access barriers, the increasing complexity of civil legal services delivery, the importance of civil equal justice to the proper functioning of our democracy, and the need for leadership and effective coordination of civil equal justice efforts in the District of Columbia.

The District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission is hereby established and is charged with responsibility of assuring high quality access for low and moderate income residents and others in the District of Columbia, who suffer disparate access barriers to the civil justice system, and with raising the profile in our community of the need for equal access to justice.

D.C. Court of Appeals, Order M-220-04, Feb. 28, 2004

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Colleagues:

The last year has been another year of signal achievement for the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission. We all know that the agenda of work to improve access to justice is inexhaustible and 2011 and 2012 were no exception.

Funding for legal services is by definition a never-ending challenge. In 2011, the Commission spearheaded a major development in our community's public-private partnership to support legal services. We were more than pleased that funding for the Access to Justice Program was renewed and even slightly increased in a year of transition in the city's leadership. The big news, though, was on the private side. Our Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign for law firm giving to legal services came into existence with a bang. The twenty-three law firms that participated in 2011 donated over \$3 million to local legal services organizations and the D.C. Bar Foundation, which represented a \$500,000 increase over 2010 giving by those firms. Attorney General Eric Holder and Deputy Mayor Paul Quander joined the Commission in saluting the generosity of the participating firms at an event held at Crowell & Moring LLP. The challenge now is to build on our initial success.

Facilitating collaborative action in the community and the courts in response to new and ongoing issues has been another hallmark of the Commission. Three significant initiatives were launched in 2011 and remain in gestation this year. First, with the support of Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, the Commission and D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program launched a cross-cutting working group to study expanded use of limited scope representation. Two highly successful Attorney of the Day Projects in the landlord-tenant and paternity and support branches have already demonstrated the potential of limited scope representation to greatly expand services for indigent and moderate-means District residents. Second, the Commission is collaborating with the Superior Court to improve the process in debt collection cases where the defendant debtor is appearing pro se. Third, the Commission convened the legal services and housing counseling communities to submit a joint proposal to the D.C. Office of the Attorney General for use of the National Mortgage Foreclosure Settlement Funds. The proposal sets forth a collaborative strategy for addressing the needs of the many District residents affected by the foreclosure crisis.

This report explains these efforts in greater detail and describes others I have not mentioned. I am proud to say that our Commission is nationally regarded as a leader among Access to Justice Commissions. Countless hours of work by Commission members along with the collaboration of the judiciary, private practitioners, legal services attorneys, and others have brought the success we have had thus far. Above all, the superb staff work of Jessica Rosenbaum and Lydia Watts has been the catalyst for making everything come together.

We have done a lot, and the work continues.

Sincerely,

Peter Edelman
Chair, District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission

ANNUAL REPORT

District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission Annual Report

2011-2012

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been another difficult year for communities living in poverty in the District of Columbia. While most of the country has been focusing on unemployment statistics and other markers of recovery to gauge the economic health of our nation, impoverished District residents know all too well that their lives have not improved. They need only look to the overcrowded shelters, the burgeoning food stamp rolls, and the historically high unemployment levels to know that their situations are dire. The most recent government data revealed that during the course of the recession, 17,500 additional District residents fell into poverty. Moreover, the number of residents living in deep poverty – defined as those living below **half** the poverty line – has risen by 25% since 2007. While poverty remains most concentrated in Wards 7 and 8, where approximately one out of every three residents is indigent, poverty has been rising much faster in Wards 4, 5, and 6 since the recession began. And leading indicators of poverty suggest that there is little relief in sight.

Access to the civil justice system is absolutely vital for the thousands of indigent District residents living one legal problem away from disaster. Legal services lawyers help low-income families stave off wrongful foreclosures and evictions, seek remediation of egregious housing code violations that compromise the health and safety of children who are poor, and access TANF, Food Stamps, and other safety net benefits. They help domestic violence victims and their children secure legal protection and flee violent homes. They assist individuals with disabilities – including children, veterans, and the elderly – access essential benefits and services. They protect low-wage earners from illegal employment practices, helping families to

remain economically stable. Unfortunately, the same financial strains that have deepened suffering in large swaths of our city also have undermined the capacity of the legal services network to meet the urgent needs of our city's most vulnerable residents. The network remains underfunded, at a time when the need for services – and the stakes for indigent residents – is far too high.

The Commission placed special emphasis this year on increasing resources for the strained legal services network. This included spearheading the *Raising the Bar* in D.C. Campaign, which significantly increased private law firm support for legal services, and continuing its leading role securing local government funding through the Access to Justice Program. The Commission also worked to enhance pro bono resources through the SAILS (Senior Attorneys Initiative for Legal Services) Program and by partnering with the Courts to launch the inaugural Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll. As always, the Commission also collaborated with the Courts to remove barriers to the civil justice system. The Commission is ever fortunate to have the judiciary, the D.C. Bar and its Pro Bono Program, the D.C. Bar Foundation, the legal services community and other institutions as close partners in our joint endeavor to increase access to justice for low- and moderate-income residents of our city.

II. INITIATIVES

A. Public Funding for Legal Services

Because of ongoing economic fragility, neither the demand for legal services nor the desperation of the clients seeking assistance has abated. High unemployment, unremitting homelessness, an unprecedented national foreclosure crisis,

and strained public systems continue to drive many more clients to the doors of legal services organizations than can possibly be served. In this environment, steady public funding to support the provision of legal services is essential.

Since its creation, the Commission has led the efforts to secure local funding for legal services. When the Commission was created in 2005, the District was one of few jurisdictions across the nation that did not provide public funds to support the provision of civil legal services to low-income residents. One of the Commission's first initiatives was to persuade the D.C. Council to establish an annual appropriation of public funds that today enables thousands of low-income residents annually to have an advocate by their side when facing a legal crisis. Over the last six years, that appropriation – known as the Access to Justice Program – has provided over \$20 million in urgently needed funds to local providers. The funds are granted and administered by the D.C. Bar Foundation, which since 1977 has been the largest non-profit funder of civil legal services in the District. Grants awarded by the Bar Foundation through this program have fundamentally transformed the capacity of the network. The funds have annually supported more than 30 lawyers who provide direct services to individuals and families facing eviction, foreclosure, family violence, exclusion from safety net programs, loss of employment, or other acute legal issues. They also have greatly expanded geographic access to services, more than doubling the number of legal services attorneys practicing east of the Anacostia River and enabling providers to expand and solidify their presence in some of the most underserved parts of the District. The funds also have supported

With support from public funds, the Children's Law Center launched a program integrating legal services into Children's National Medical Center's Generations program this year. Teen parents and their children receive primary medical care and legal support from this partnership, one of only a few "teen-tot" programs in the country. In its pilot year, an on-site attorney provided legal advice and trained doctors and parents to identify legal concerns.



critical initiatives that serve populations – such as homebound elders – that previously had sparse access, if any, to legal assistance.

Over the last few years, the Commission has successfully mobilized the legal community several times to protect this crucial funding stream from budget cuts. Before the recession, funding for the Access to Justice Program had reached an annual level of \$3.6 million. In response to budget pressures, in 2010 the program was twice singled out by the Executive Branch for drastic funding cuts that would have severely undermined the effectiveness of the network. In both instances, the Commission successfully mounted a community-wide campaign to preserve the funding. The Chief Judges of the D.C. Court of Appeals and the Superior Court of D.C., the President of the American Bar Association, the President of the District of Columbia Bar, twenty-five former Presidents of the District of Columbia Bar and the Executive Director of the D.C. Bar Foundation joined with the Commission to advocate for preservation of the funds. The Commission's advocacy also prompted ten D.C. Bar sections – led by the Litigation Section – to issue a public statement urging the Council to protect the program. Countless members of the legal community contacted the Council to voice its broad support for equal access to justice. Because of the Commission's leadership, the program twice escaped proposed cuts of up to 50%.

In 2011, the Commission worked closely with Bar and Court leaders to persuade the Executive Branch to propose full funding for the program at the outset of the fiscal year 2012 budget process.

The Children's Law Center's (CLC) ongoing work at two community health clinics in Southeast D.C. – supported again this year by ATJ funding – has the same focus as CLC's work as a whole: achieving a solid foundation of family, health, and education. As part of a medical-legal partnership with Children's National Medical Center, on-site attorneys provide representation and advice to families struggling in situations that can harm their children's health: substandard housing conditions, unmet educational needs, and lack of access to proper health care.

Under the Commission's leadership, the Chief Judges of both local District of Columbia Courts, the President of the District of Columbia Bar, and other legal community leaders sent letters to the Mayor hailing the critical importance of the program to individual District residents and to the administration of justice more generally. As a result of these efforts, and parallel advocacy during the Council's budget negotiations, the program was funded at \$3.2 million for fiscal year 2012. Thanks to the steadfast leadership of D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, who has championed the program for many years, this represented a slight increase over the previous year's funding at a time when budget pressures were forcing cuts in other areas. There is no doubt that the community-wide protest of the 2010 proposed funding cuts helped to shield the program from cuts in 2011.

Attachment I describes the projects funded by the D.C. Bar Foundation through the Access to Justice Program in fiscal year 2011. This includes the highly successful Court-Based Legal Services Project through which lawyers from **The Legal Aid Society of D.C.**, **Bread for the City**, and the **D.C. Law Students in Court Program** provide same day representation to tenants in imminent danger of losing their homes. This project provided critical interventions to over 2,000 individuals in fiscal year 2011 and is often the only thing standing between poor families and homelessness. The funding also enabled the launch of four innovative new programs:

- **The Legal Aid Society of D.C. and Bread for the City** partnered to create the Child Support Community Legal Services Project which provides same day services to low-income parents in child support proceedings.
- **The Children's Law Center** piloted the Generations Teen Parent Access Project, an expansion of its medical-legal partnership with Children's National Medical Center, which provides legal representation to teen parents and their children.
- **Legal Counsel for the Elderly** established a Real Property Tax Project that helps prevent elderly, long-term D.C. homeowners from losing their homes to tax foreclosure.
- **Advocates for Justice and Education** received support for the School Discipline Legal Services Project which provides legal representation and support to families in school suspension and expulsion proceedings.

Access to Justice funds continue to support the nationally-recognized **Community Legal Interpreter Bank** which provides essential interpretation services to residents who are non- or limited-English speaking or who are deaf or hearing impaired. The Bank enables clients to communicate with their legal services or pro bono attorneys and prepare for court hearings in that crucial interval before in-court interpretation is available.

In addition, the funds support the **Loan Repayment Assistance Program**, also administered by the D.C. Bar Foundation, which helps to reduce the staggering loans that many legal services lawyers face. This program has become an important tool for providers to recruit and maintain its talented and diverse corps of anti-poverty



lawyers. Without this program, crushing law school debt would preclude many talented and passionate advocates from pursuing public service careers and deprive the network of the cadre of experienced legal services attorneys who are leading the network's most effective initiatives.

B. Raising the Bar in D.C.: A Funding Campaign for Legal Services

Legal services funding has been significantly undermined during the economic downturn, particularly by the precipitous drop in Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Funds. This revenue stream, which has traditionally been the largest non-public source of funding for civil legal services, has decreased by over 80% since 2008, and there is no promise of improvement until interest rates recover. These millions of dollars in lost funding have seriously compromised the ability of the legal services network to meet client needs.

To address these serious shortfalls, the Commission launched the *Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign*, which established revenue-based benchmarks for law firm donations to legal services organizations. Firms are recognized at three different levels – .11% of D.C. office revenue for platinum, .09% for gold, and .075% for silver – for their generosity and leadership in supporting the underfunded legal services network.

This groundbreaking campaign, unique in the nation in setting benchmarks based on law firm office revenue, is infusing urgently needed resources into the network. In this inaugural year, the twenty-three firms that met benchmark levels in 2011 together donated over \$3 million to local legal services organizations. This represents over a half million dollar increase in giving by those firms from 2010 levels. The increase in donations by these firms represents a strong statement of commitment by the private bar, particularly in this time of ongoing economic uncertainty, and represents the type of partnership that is essential to closing the justice gap.

In March 2011, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and D.C. Deputy Mayor Paul Quander joined with the Commission to honor the Leadership Circle firms. The reception, generously hosted by the law firm of Crowell & Moring LLP, was attended by U.S. Department of Justice leaders, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia Royce Lamberth, officials from the Mayor's office and the Office of the D.C. Attorney General, Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, as well as approximately 150 members of the legal community. In his remarks, Attorney General Holder lauded the Commission and the Leadership Circle firms for making "good on our shared commitment to ensuring access to justice for our city's most vulnerable residents" and making "remarkable strides toward closing the 'justice gap,' and protecting the basic rights of the most vulnerable members of our society." A list of Leadership Circle firms and the Attorney General's remarks are at Attachment II.

Legal Counsel for the Elderly's (LCE) Real Property Tax Project helps older D.C. homeowners – many who have lived in our community for decades – from unnecessarily losing their homes. In one instance, after two years of advocacy, LCE was able to satisfactorily resolve a real property tax issue for a client that had originated in 2006. The client had paid her 2006 real property taxes, but the property was re-classified and she received a new tax bill in 2007 claiming that she owed nearly an additional \$9,000. Even though she had been continuously contesting the re-classification, her property was included in an auction for tax sale. As a result, she was a defendant in two real property tax foreclosure lawsuits, and the claim indicated that the property was vacant for subsequent years, even though she was living in the property. After two years of advocacy in the courts and with agency officials, the District agreed to cancel the real property tax certificates on the property, allowing her to be dismissed from the real property tax foreclosure lawsuits, and her property was re-classified as residential.

The Commission knows that even with this significant infusion of funds, the need for services is many multiples higher than available resources. To that end, the Commission has been working to increase the number of participating firms in 2012.

C. The Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll

In October 2011, the Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program proposed, designed and helped the D.C. Courts to launch the Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll as part of the American Bar Association's National Celebration of Pro Bono. This new initiative, which recognizes the essential role that D.C. Bar members and others eligible to practice in D.C. play in providing free legal services to those who cannot afford counsel, honors attorneys who provide 50 hours or more of pro bono service – or 100 hours or more of service for the higher recognition category – per year.

The District has traditionally had one of the most generous pro bono cultures in the nation, but that pro bono commitment has been tested by changes to the law firm business model and the contraction of new associate classes. At this critical juncture,

Access to Justice funds enable Whitman-Walker Health (WWH) to operate a legal services office at its Max Robinson Center (MRC) in Ward 8, thereby greatly increasing its profile east of the river. During the 2011-2012 grant year, 276 residents were served through the Ward 8 office. Due largely to the heightened profile that WWH Legal Services now enjoys in Anacostia, the number of Ward 7 and 8 residents receiving legal advice and representation at WWH's two sites has more than tripled since the MRC legal office opened in 2007. One of the critical services provided at MRC is a walk-in clinic during the annual open enrollment period for the Medicare Part D prescription drug program. This expert assistance ensures that low income residents are enrolled in plans that cover all of their medications and save them hundreds or even thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket drug costs.



publication of the Honor Roll underscores the widespread commitment to pro bono work throughout the legal community and helps to increase the number of attorneys donating their time and expertise to those in need.

In this inaugural year, over 3,000 attorneys registered for the Honor Roll, including over 2,000 who registered for the High Honor Roll. The attorneys represented over 120 legal settings including over 80 law firms – from large firms to solo practitioners – and several federal government agencies. Since the initiative relied on a self-nomination process, many more submissions are expected as the Honor Roll is more widely publicized. The Chief Judges' letters launching the program and congratulating honorees are at Attachment III. The Honor Roll itself has been published on the Courts' website at <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/about/probonohonorroll/main.jsf>.

D. The SAILS (Senior Attorneys Initiative for Legal Services) Project

Under the leadership of Marc Fleischaker, Chair Emeritus of the law firm of Arent Fox LLP, the Commission and D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program launched the SAILS (Senior Attorneys Initiative for Legal Services) Project in October 2010. This innovative program works directly with law firms to institutionalize senior lawyers programs firm-wide. Affirmative institutional support from participating firms encourages and supports senior attorneys to undertake substantial pro bono work as a next phase of their careers or as a component

With ATJ funding, Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) serves the legal needs of some of the most vulnerable senior citizens living in the District: the homebound elderly. For example, the “D.C. Homebound Elderly Project” (Project HELP) assisted a frail, elderly, blind man living in his own house in Ward 5. Because both of his legs had been amputated, he was largely confined to a bed. The client had experienced extreme trauma in recent years, including a devastating fire that almost completely destroyed his home. To make matters worse, his insurance company denied the claim. Through LCE’s advocacy, his house has been repaired. Project HELP staff also helped him revoke old powers of attorney and sign new documents which named his dear friend as his legal representative. This elderly gentleman greatly appreciated the assistance he received, and he rewarded staff by singing from his bed.

of their retirement. These efforts promise to harness the vast experience of the many talented senior lawyers in the District to meet the urgent needs of indigent residents. It also creates a valuable path for the many senior attorneys transitioning from billable work who want to use their considerable talents and skills to benefit indigent members of our community.

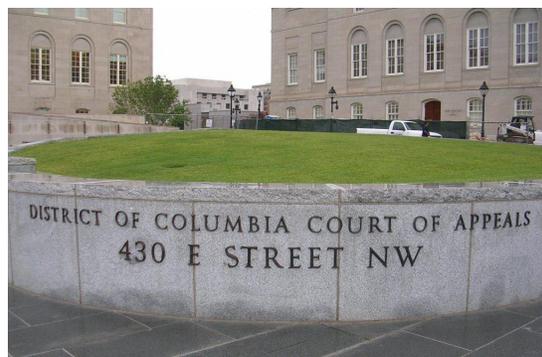
In 2011, the Commission and the Pro Bono Program worked intensively with the participating law firms to explore diverse paradigms for supporting senior lawyer pro bono. This included an examination of different firms’ phase down and/or retirement policies, pro bono cultures, and approaches to encouraging and supporting pro bono activities. The Commission and the Pro Bono Program also researched innovative programs undertaken in other jurisdictions. All of this information and analysis has been captured on a new Senior Lawyer Pro Bono/SAILS Project website that the Commission and the Pro Bono Program will soon launch. In order to facilitate the formation of new SAILS Programs at other law firms and promote senior lawyer pro bono more widely, the site includes sample policy

documents, materials reviewing the types of issues law firms should consider when crafting senior lawyer programs, and issues senior lawyers should evaluate when determining whether and how to take on substantial pro bono commitments. When completed, the website also will serve as a clearinghouse for information about senior lawyer pro bono projects and will have a dynamic database through which individual senior attorneys can directly connect with pro bono opportunities. The site will also feature pages by each participating SAILS firm with information about their projects and testimonials from participating attorneys.

E. The Courts and the Office of Administrative Hearings

The Commission greatly values its close collaboration with the Chief Judges of the District of Columbia’s Court of Appeals, Superior Court, and Office of Administrative Hearings. We continue to work in close partnership to remove barriers to self-representation for those who cannot secure counsel. Even the most efficient and well-resourced network will never be able to provide counsel to every individual who needs assistance. Given this reality, it is imperative to make self-representation a viable option for the tens of thousands of indigent and modest means residents who will have no other choice. Our work this year has included the following:

- ▶ **D.C. Code of Judicial Conduct:** The Commission worked closely with the Court to ensure that the revised D.C. Code of Judicial Conduct makes explicit the affirmative role of judges in facilitating self-represented individuals’ right to be heard. The Commission successfully



advocated for language underscoring that judges should make reasonable accommodations to enable meaningful access to the court system and setting forth concrete examples of the steps judges may consider to assist pro se litigants. The Commission strongly lauds the Court for adopting language that is much more robust than the ABA Model Code and that is now setting the standard for other jurisdictions.

■ **Judicial Training on Pro Se Litigants:**

Commission representatives worked with the Courts' Standing Committee on Fairness and Access and the Superior Court's Judicial Education Committee to design a judicial training on presiding over cases involving pro se litigants. The training focused on the new Code of Judicial Conduct language and in particular on the practical elements of ensuring that pro se litigants have a meaningful opportunity to be heard.

■ **Limited Scope Representation:**

The Commission and the Pro Bono Program jointly launched a limited scope representation initiative that is examining the court-wide expansion of limited scope practice in the District. Limited scope representation is being used successfully in other jurisdictions to increase access to both paid and pro bono counsel. After undertaking substantial research, the Commission and Pro Bono Program formed a Working Group that includes varied segments of the legal community as well as a representative from the Court. The Working Group is examining successful paradigms from other jurisdictions and expects to forward a proposal to the Court early next year.

■ **Consumer Debt Collection:**

The Commission worked closely with members of the community to propose improvements in consumer debt collection cases. The Federal Trade Commission – and jurisdictions across the nation – have identified consumer debt collection as an area

D.C. Law Students in Court's (LSIC) Attorney of the Day (AOD) Project is a core strategy that has increased LSIC's ability to provide high-quality legal assistance to low-income D.C. residents facing eviction and other housing challenges in landlord-tenant court. The AOD project has also expanded LSIC's ability to reach out to tenant communities and provide tenants' rights information. With the support of public funding, LSIC hired a Spanish-speaking attorney who has added to its capacity to assist the District's Latino community. Together, these initiatives support LSIC's goals of ensuring that families stay in their homes and avoiding unfair, unnecessary evictions.

urgently in need of reform. In an overwhelming number of cases, unrepresented consumers are trying to navigate cases against sophisticated businesses and skilled counsel where the legal issues are highly complex. Many cases are rife with abuse, including debt buyers proceeding without documentation of owning the original debt, suing on time-barred debts, and failing to properly notify consumers of suits. In response, the Commission submitted a proposal to the Court that would institute reforms proven to be effective in other jurisdictions.

■ **Consumer Court-Based Legal Services Project:**

In response to the Court's – and the legal services community's – concerns about the lack of representation for consumers in debt collection cases, Commission representatives are working with The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia., Legal Counsel for the Elderly, and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program to facilitate creation of a court-based legal services project, modeled on the very successful projects in the landlord-tenant and paternity and support branches. The Commission submitted and the Court recently issued an Administrative Order permitting temporary appearances in these cases.

- Language Access:** In Spring 2012, the Commission formally endorsed the ABA Language Access Standards prepared by the Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. The Standards create a blueprint for courts in establishing a comprehensive system of language access services appropriate to the communities they serve. The Commission will be working with the Court's Committee on Access and Fairness to review current language access policies and practices and identify areas for improvement.

- Pro Bono Financial Contributions:** The Commission submitted formal comments supporting an amendment to Comment [5] of Rule 6.1 of the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct, which raised D.C.-licensed attorneys' recommended pro bono financial contribution from \$400 to \$750.

- Unemployment Compensation Project:** The Commission worked with Georgetown Law's Community Justice Project to identify weaknesses and potential reforms in the unemployment compensation process. This includes the often lengthy interval between the Office of Administrative Hearing's determination and a final decision by the D.C. Court of Appeals, the difficulty of claiming back benefits for litigants who prevail on appeal, and operational barriers involving filing of forms with the Department of Employment Services. The Commission is in the process of gathering additional data from the Court to inform its next steps.

- Office of Administrative Hearings Resource Center:** The Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program worked closely with OAH on the design of its Pro Se Resource Center. OAH has now opened a resource center whose first director was an experienced former legal services attorney.

F. Outreach

The Commission continues to collaborate closely with the D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers, the network of law firm pro bono counsel, Bar leadership and community-based organizations to elevate discussion of access to justice issues and provide information about the availability of legal services. This has included the following:

- On January 14, 2012, the Commission participated in full force at the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program's Advice & Referral Clinic hosted by Bread for the City's Northwest Center. Joining volunteers from the law firm of Jones Day, the State Department, the FDIC and the FEC, Access to Justice Commissioners provided legal information, advice and brief services to 81 pro se litigants in a variety of legal matters, including debt/bankruptcy, estate administration/probate, family law, consumer, housing, employment and public benefits.

- The Commission worked with the D.C. Bar to help secure renewal of the Bar leadership's authority to lobby for public funding for legal services. The strong and vocal support

ATJ funding supports the Neighborhood Legal Services Program's (NLSP) three attorneys located in Ward 7, one of the most economically depressed areas of the city. Attorneys fight to retain safe, healthy and affordable housing for low-income tenants and homeowners, ensure that clients have access to the healthcare and income supports to which they are entitled, redress the consequences of financial exploitation and protect victims of violence. NLSP partners with community organizations to bring about lasting change for the people it is serving, including those in Ward 7. In 2011, ATJ-funded attorneys served nearly 500 clients directly, and conducted community education seminars and clinics that assisted more than 600 additional persons.

of Bar leaders has been instrumental to the Commission's efforts to preserve the Access to Justice Program.

- ▶ The Commission worked closely with the District's National Pro Bono Week Working Group to plan activities, including the launch of the Pro Bono Honor Roll, for the ABA's 2011 National Celebration of Pro Bono.
- ▶ The Commission made presentations at the Bar's Sections Council and Voluntary Bar Leadership meetings to raise awareness of access to justice issues and the strains facing the legal services network. In particular, the Commission sought assistance publicizing the *Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign* and securing vocal public support for the Access to Justice Program.
- ▶ The Chair of the Commission participated in a Civil Right to Counsel discussion organized by the Bar's Section on Courts, Lawyers and the Administration of Justice.
- ▶ The Commission provided input for the strategic planning processes of the Court and the Council for Court Excellence.
- ▶ The Commission joined with over 90 law firms and other entities in the *Go Casual for Justice Day* which raises money for the D.C. Bar Foundation's Loan Repayment Assistance Program.
- ▶ The Commission continues to feature presentations by Access to Justice Program grantees and other community organizations at Commission meetings to educate Commissioners and the larger community about the critical work supported by the public appropriation.

G. National

The Commission is actively engaged with the ABA Resource Center on Access to Justice Initiatives

The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center's Housing and Community Justice Project deepened its scope of legal services to low-income Asian residents in the District by establishing walk-in intakes sessions at its office and community-based organizations, and conducting workshops on various legal issues pertinent to this population. It also continued to strengthen tenant groups by engaging them in District-wide affordable housing and language access advocacy as well as improving their internal governance.

and with the national access to justice community. At the NLADA's Centennial Conference, several Commissioners moderated and participated in panels addressing both national access to justice issues and local initiatives. Commissioners and staff also made presentations at the Equal Justice Conference, the National Access to Justice Chairs Meeting, the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants Roundtable and the ABA Commission on IOLTA Meeting. This spring, the Commission was invited to make a presentation about its work at a national meeting of the Legal Services Corporation. Commission leaders and staff regularly participate in Access to Justice Chairs teleconferences, and most recently made a presentation about the Commission's work with the Office of Administrative Hearings. In addition, the Commission regularly makes contributions to the ABA Resource Center for its library of access to justice innovations and its regular reports to the Conference of Chief Justices.

H. Media

As in previous years, the Commission is proud that many of its programs have received attention in both national and local media. *The Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign*, the SAILS Project, the Pro Bono Honor Roll, and some of the Courts-related initiatives have been featured in the *National Law Journal*, the *Washington Post's* Capital Business Section, *Bisnow*, and the *Washington Lawyer*, among others. Those articles can be found on the Commission's website, www.dcccesstojustice.org.

III. COMMISSION SUPPORT

Financial support for the Commission is provided through the District of Columbia Access to Justice Foundation, a 501(c)(3) corporation whose sole purposes are to raise and receive funds for the Commission and employ Commission staff. The Commission is fortunate to have a dedicated Foundation Board that raises funds to support its work. The Commission is mindful that its Board members have demanding professional and other commitments and deeply appreciates the efforts they expend on the Commission's behalf. Foundation Board members are listed at Attachment IV.

The Commission is grateful for the financial and in-kind support of a number of leading law firms and other donors. Without their generosity and commitment to access to justice, the Commission would not be able to pursue its crucial mission. The Commission does not receive any public funds and, therefore relies entirely on private donations to support its work. The steadfast support of these firms, many of which have funded the Commission since its inception, has enabled all of the advances described in this Annual Report. A list of donors is included at Attachment V.

The Commission also deeply appreciates the critical in-kind support provided by law firms and other entities. Venable LLP provides the Commission with office space, equipment and office services. DLA Piper LLP (US) serves as the Commission's pro bono research counsel. Steptoe & Johnson LLP is the Foundation's pro bono general counsel and generously produces this Annual Report each year. Goodwin Procter LLP provides space and refreshments for the Commission's general meetings.

The Commission also greatly values the essential support it received in connection with the *Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign*. The *National Law Journal* serves as the Campaign's official media sponsor, providing advertising as well as news coverage. Scott Sobel at Media and

University Legal Services' Jail Advocacy Project provides holistic legal advocacy to address the unique needs of youth and adults with psychiatric disabilities navigating the criminal and mental health systems. Since its inception, the Project has addressed abuse and neglect behind bars and advocated for access to quality care and treatment alternatives to unnecessary incarceration for over 500 District residents with psychiatric disabilities. Over 5,500 clients, attorneys, provider and correctional administrators have participated in the project's public education initiatives.

Communication Strategies provided vital media support during the Campaign's launch. John Theis at Ernst & Young assumed the crucial role of collecting data from participating firms and apprising the Commission of recognition levels. Ernst & Young also tabulated the data to establish the overall giving and percentage increase in giving during the Campaign. Finally, Crowell & Moring LLP hosted the spectacular reception honoring the Raising the Bar Leadership Circle.

None of the Commission's initiatives would be possible without the generous support of these firms and other entities.

IV. CONCLUSION

We hope this Annual Report illuminates the role that all segments of the legal community play in increasing access to justice for the most vulnerable and underserved members of our community. There is no panacea for the challenges of intractable poverty, made all the more severe by the economic downturn and slow recovery. There is no single initiative, no piece of legislation, no court decision, that singlehandedly can alleviate the suffering that so many District families endure. But working together, aggregating our efforts, we

The new Child Support Community Legal Services Project, a joint endeavor of Bread for the City and the Legal Aid Society of D.C., offers for the first time court-based legal services in the Paternity & Child Support Branch. Most parentage and child support cases in this part of the Court are filed by government attorneys on behalf of the District, and most custodial and noncustodial parents are unrepresented. Staffing a court-based office four mornings a week, the two organizations have increased access to justice by connecting legal services attorneys to pro se custodial and noncustodial parents when they need them the most – at court on their scheduled court date. During the Project’s first funding year, Bread for the City and Legal Aid provided legal services to low-income parents in 569 parentage and child support cases. Project attorneys provided same-day legal help in approximately 87% of the cases, and approximately 82% of those parents receiving same day legal help at the courthouse live in the District’s poorest wards (5,6,7, and 8).

can make a real difference. We can help ensure that families on the verge of losing their homes have skilled and dedicated attorneys to protect their rights. We can help ensure that children with disabilities, returning veterans, and homebound elders have advocates when they are denied access to life-saving safety net programs. We can help ensure that language access barriers do not prevent domestic violence victims from escaping violent homes. We can scrutinize our courts and government agencies to identify the cracks through which indigent residents regularly slip and work collaboratively to mend them.

Every segment of the legal community has a role to play in closing the appalling justice gap in our community. And this year, the legal community’s broad commitment to equal justice was manifest. The private bar infused urgently-needed resources into the legal services network through the *Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign*. Thousands of private and federal government attorneys, now recognized

on the Pro Bono Honor Roll, magnified the capacity of the legal services network by providing thousands of hours of pro bono service. Senior attorneys in leading law firms worked on innovative initiatives, leveraging their considerable expertise and skills to help those most in need. Legal services providers, ever the last line of defense for so many vulnerable families, did more with less while launching new innovations and forging systemic changes. The D.C. Courts helped lead the charge to preserve public funding for legal services while also speaking boldly about the Courts’ own obligations to administer justice in an active and impartial way that helps remove barriers for pro se litigants. The District government, recognizing the pivotal importance of the Access to Justice Program, maintained level funding for the program, even in the face of daunting budget challenges.

The Commission is deeply proud of all we have accomplished together, but is ever focused on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. There is much more that we can do – and much more that we must do – to make equal justice a reality. We hope you will join us.

The Legal Aid Society of D.C. and Bread for the City’s Community Based Legal Services Project took on new representations in over 600 cases before the Landlord and Tenant Branch and the Housing Conditions Calendar. These representations resulted in over \$700,000 in financial benefit to more than 1,500 D.C. residents. With nearly two years of experience litigating cases before the new Housing Conditions Calendar, project attorneys now have an informed perspective on the Court’s operations and possible areas for reform. The Affirmative Housing Conditions Court Committee, which includes two project attorneys, currently is working on implementing rules to improve the efficacy of the calendar. The Project also is working on a new city-wide outreach project targeting tenants living in bank-owned properties with substantial housing code violations.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSIONERS
2011-2012



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THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BAR FOUNDATION
FUNDING LEGAL SERVICES FOR THOSE IN NEED



**FY 2011 PUBLICLY FUNDED GRANTS TO
LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS**

OVERVIEW

This overview provides a brief summary of the programs funded for FY 2011 grants to civil legal services providers. The programs described below received new or continued funding.

COMMUNITY LEGAL INTERPRETER BANK

1. **Ayuda** was funded to continue the legal interpreter bank to provide assistance to legal service providers using “community legal interpreters.” Ayuda is the lead organization, complemented by an Advisory Board. The project serves as a national model for coordinated, point-of-service legal interpreter services.

Grant Award for FY11: \$255,000

HOUSING RELATED SERVICES

2. Landlord-Tenant Court Based Legal Services Project

A collaborative including the **Legal Aid Society of DC** and **Bread for the City** received continued funding to maintain lawyers in the Landlord Tenant Court to provide legal services to low income tenants in DC through an “attorney-of-the-day” project that enjoys strong support from the Superior Court judges serving in Landlord-Tenant Court. Tenants receive same-day representation in matters they have in court, and long-term help on housing matters. By increasing representation in Landlord Tenant Court, lawyers help keep families in housing, address code violations, and keep housing affordable. The partners will each provide four lawyers for the project. One of the lawyers from Legal Aid Society is charged with providing coordination to the project. The service providers have launched a pro bono component to the project, securing pro bono assistance in selected long-term matters.

Grant Award for FY11: \$550,000

3. Landlord-Tenant Court Attorney of the Day Project

DC Law Students in Court (DC LSIC) received continued public funding to support an attorney to work at the Landlord Tenant Court in collaboration with the Landlord-Tenant Court Based Legal Services Project. This grant leverages additional legal assistance from law students on matters residents bring to Landlord-Tenant Court.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$72,000

4. Housing and Community Justice Project

The Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center (APALRC) is the region’s legal advocate for the legal and civil rights of Asian Americans in the Washington metropolitan area. APALRC’s Housing and Community Justice Project provides a critical bridge between low income and LEP Asian immigrant families and communities in the District, and will provide both housing and community development legal services. The project focuses on the provision of legal services, education materials, activities to protect affordable housing, and language access for Asian immigrants, largely clustered in Ward 1 neighborhoods. Public funding provides continued partial support for a staff lawyer.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$36,000

5. Real Property Tax Project

Legal Counsel for the Elderly received public funding to support its Real Property Tax Project. The Project helps prevent elderly, long-time DC homeowners from unnecessarily losing their homes via real property tax foreclosure. The funding supports a portion of the salary for one staff attorney.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$18,000

NEIGHBORHOOD AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY GRANTS

6. Community Lawyering Project

Bread for the City has received continued funding for its innovative community lawyering work, which has added legal services to the other services it provides at its facility on Good Hope Road, SE (border of Wards 7 and 8). The public grant continues to fund one of the lawyers on this project, who works directly with the community, helps identify options to address concerns, and provides substantial direct representation to individuals in the community.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$53,000

7. Southeast Health Access Project

Children’s Law Center (CLC) received continued funding for the expansion of the Health Access Project (HAP) into Southeast DC. In this innovative medical-legal collaboration, lawyers funded in the HAP SE project provide services through the three SE Clinic offices of the Children’s National Medical Center (CNMC). The lawyers work with families of CNMC patients to identify and resolve non-medical solutions to children’s health issues. The HAP SE project will continue to expand its SE pro bono program, leveraging additional private legal resources for the community. HAP is a partnership project with the Children’s National Medical Center.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$203,000

8. Southeast Neighborhood Access Project

Legal Aid Society has received continued public funding to support lawyers to work with clients from offices co-located with other service organizations in Wards 7 and 8. Lawyers work out of the Domestic Violence Intake Center in Southeast, the Children’s Health Project located at THEARC, and Advocates for Justice and Education in Anacostia, and provide a range of civil legal services.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$372,000

9. Project HELP

Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) was awarded continued public funding for an attorney to assist low income homebound elders in need of wills, advance directives, and public benefits audits, as well as those affected by consumer scams, and experiencing housing related issues. The attorney brings legal services directly to those low-income seniors who cannot get out to meet with an attorney. The Project HELP lawyer also draws on and support a growing pool of pro bono lawyers and other volunteer professionals to provide increased legal services to homebound seniors.

Grant Award FY 2011: \$73,000

10. Neighborhood Expansion Project

Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) received continued funding to provide neighborhood based legal services in housing, family law, public benefits, consumer, employment, education, guardianship, and wills/estates. This funding supports the salaries of three lawyers located in Ward 7 in NLSP's neighborhood legal services office on Nannie Helen Burroughs Ave., NE.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$266,000

11. DC Jail Access Project

University Legal Services (ULS) serves as DC's federally mandated protection and advocacy organization – charged with working for the rights of people with disabilities. ULS received continued funding to support a staff attorney to provide legal services and direct advocacy for inmates in the DC Jail and other DC correctional facilities with mental disabilities. The staff attorney has established good relationships, and works closely, with DC Department of Corrections, DC Department of Mental Health and Federal Bureau of Prisons regarding DC prisoners.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$99,000

12. Neighborhood Domestic Violence Legal Services

Washington Empowered Against Violence (WEAVE) received continued funding to provide legal services to low income victims of domestic violence through co-located services in Fort Totten at the Lighthouse Center for Healing, which opened in the spring of 2008, on the border of Wards 4 and 5. The Center provides “one-stop” services for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, and survivors of homicide, by co-locating an office of the MPD, US Attorney, Victim Services, and counseling and relevant legal services. With FY 2011 funding, WEAVE will expand its services to Southeast through a partnership with Whitman-Walker Legal Health. This public funding partially supports the work of eight lawyers and a paralegal.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$266,000

13. Southeast Legal Services Expansion

Whitman Walker Legal Health received continued funding to provide legal representation, counseling and outreach to people living with HIV/AIDS through lawyers based at its Max Robinson Clinic to individuals living in Wards 7 and 8. This grant adds legal services to the medical services provided at the Max Robinson Clinic.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$166,000

14. Child Support Court Based Legal Services Project

Bread for the City and the **Legal Aid Society** received new funding to launch the Child Support Court Based Legal Services Project. The Project's partners will open a court-based legal services office at the Paternity & Support Branch of the DC Superior Court. The public funding will support three new staff attorney positions to provide representation to low-income parents in child support proceedings.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$245,000

15. Generations Teen Parent Access Project

Children's Law Center received new funding to expand its existing publicly-funded medical-legal partnership to include the Children's National Medical Center's Generations program that focuses on teen parents and their children. The project will provide legal representation on a wide range of issues and health outcomes for teen parents and their children.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$43,000

16. School Discipline Legal Services Project

Advocates for Justice and Education received new funding to address the increasing demand for legal representation and support in suspension and expulsion proceedings. The public funding will allow AJE to hire one new staff attorney and increase its Director of Legal Services position from part-time to full-time.

Grant Award for FY 2011: \$90,000

**RAISING THE BAR IN D.C.
A FUNDING CAMPAIGN FOR LEGAL SERVICES**

Sponsored by the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission



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JUSTICE NEWS**Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at the Raising the Bar in D.C. Event**

Washington, D.C.~Thursday, March 22, 2012

As prepared for delivery

Thank you, Peter [Edelman] for your kind words, for your outstanding leadership as Chair of the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission – and of course for your friendship over the years. I'd also like to thank our hosts, Crowell and Moring, for providing such an excellent venue for tonight's celebration.

It's a pleasure to join you in marking the inaugural year of this groundbreaking Raising the Bar campaign. And it's a special privilege to stand alongside Deputy Mayor [Paul] Quander, Councilman [Phil] Mendelson, distinguished members of the bench, representatives of the District of Columbia Attorney General's office – along with my colleagues from the Department's Access to Justice Office, and my good friends Darrell Motley, President of the D.C. Bar; Katia Garrett, Executive Director of the DC Bar Foundation; and Jim Sandman, President of the Legal Services Corporation – as we come together to recognize the 23 firms that already have helped to make this initiative a resounding success.

As a result of the vision – and the tireless work – of so many Commission members, Foundation partners, and critical allies from across Washington's legal community – including many of my former colleagues from Covington and Burling, who I'm happy to see this evening – you've helped make good on our shared commitment to ensuring access to justice for our city's most vulnerable residents. You've made remarkable strides toward closing the "justice gap," and protecting the basic rights of the most vulnerable members of our society. And – from Anacostia to Georgetown – you're helping to fulfill our nation's founding promise of equal justice under law.

Particularly in this time of unprecedented economic challenges – when government agencies have been asked to accomplish more with less, and funding for legal services is increasingly scarce – the obstacles we face have been brought into stark focus. And here in our nation's capital, they could not be more clear. As a recent study by this Commission and the D.C. Consortium of Legal Service Providers revealed, thousands of local residents have been denied access to legal services, millions of dollars have disappeared from the budget for this area's legal services network, and entire programs have been eliminated because of significant staff and resource shortfalls.

But in the face of this crisis, I am proud to note that attorneys and advocates throughout D.C. have responded not with despair – but with resolve. Your actions and generosity are already making a tremendous difference. And – although you are certainly leading the way – the good news is that you're far from alone.

Over the last 15 years, more than half of all states – plus the District of Columbia – have created Access to Justice Commissions. Here in Washington, Commission leaders, supporters, and partners have taken a central role in reinvigorating this city's pro bono culture – and providing representation to those who cannot afford to retain counsel. And, despite the absence of adequate funding, your efforts to reduce barriers to access have made a difference in thousands of lives.

Your work also has helped to strengthen the groundbreaking Access to Justice Initiative that the Justice Department launched two years ago this month. As many of you know firsthand, this initiative has helped to expand and enhance national efforts to build quality indigent defense systems. Over the last two years, we've engaged a variety of partners in this work – from state, local and tribal officials, to members of the nonprofit and private sector communities. And we continue to make much-needed progress in identifying, sharing, and implementing the most innovative and effective strategies for addressing the indigent defense crisis.

Thanks to the outstanding work being led by our Access to Justice team – along with other Department components, including the Office of Justice Programs; and initiatives like the Federal Government Pro Bono Program – there's no question that we've made meaningful, measurable progress – identifying concrete reform strategies, improving our understanding of these issues, and directly supporting efforts to implement the ABA's

“Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System.” But we also recognize that government – on its own – will never be able to achieve the results that we need – and that the American people deserve.

That’s why I am honored to join you in celebrating the success that this city’s legal community has achieved – particularly through this first-of-its-kind fundraising campaign. Over the last year alone, the 23 law firms we’ve gathered to honor donated more than \$3 million to local legal services providers – an increase of more than half a million dollars from the amount they gave in 2010. Each one gave at benchmark levels, with several firms substantially increasing their donations in order to meet threshold goals.

As a result, the people in this room haven’t just set a good example – you’ve set the standard. Your generosity is providing critical aid to minors, victims of domestic violence, and families facing eviction. It’s helping to safeguard the health, the well-being, and the constitutional rights of countless individuals. And –as many of you have made clear to me – this is only the beginning.

Newly-formed Commissions in Connecticut, Kansas, and Kentucky – among many others – will undoubtedly look to Raising the Bar as a model of success. In fact, today and tomorrow, a member of the Department’s Access to Justice staff is working with authorities in Indiana – including members of the state Supreme Court and a broad swath of the bench and bar – to develop goals for a possible Access to Justice Commission in that state. They certainly can draw inspiration from what you’ve accomplished right here in D.C. – especially through Raising the Bar.

Now, I believe we can all be proud of the tremendous work we’ve gathered to celebrate this evening – and we should all be encouraged by the promise that this campaign holds for the future. But I also recognize that we cannot yet be satisfied – and this is no time to become complacent.

The nearly two dozen firms represented here this evening are in a unique position to rally others to this cause and into action. I urge you not only to keep up your great work – but also to engage with additional partners across government and the nonprofit and private sectors.

This type of collaborative approach is essential – and, without question, will help to continue the momentum you’ve created. It also will help us to fulfill our collective responsibility, as members of the legal profession, not merely to win cases – but to do justice. And it will have a profound positive impact on countless individuals and families across – and far beyond – our nation’s capital.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of our efforts will be measured not in dollars and cents, but in challenges that are met and overcome; in lives that are touched and improved; and in the rights – of all Americans, including indigent populations – that are protected and restored.

So – as we celebrate tonight – let us also seize the opportunity to renew our commitment to this work, and to make it not only our shared priority, but our common cause. Let us lift up stand-out efforts like Raising the Bar, and encourage our peers to help replicate and refine this model. Above all, let us continue to do everything in our power to ensure that – in our nation’s capital, and in communities across the country – equal access to justice is not just an aspiration, but a reality, for all Americans.

In these efforts, I am proud to count each of you as colleagues and partners. I am grateful for your commitment to public service – and to the strength and integrity of our justice system. And I look forward to where your efforts will take us in the months and years ahead.

Congratulations on the extraordinary progress you’ve already made – and, once again, thank you all.



District of Columbia Courts
500 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Room 6680
Washington, D.C. 20001
202-879-1700 Office
202-879-4829 Fax



March 21, 2012

Open Letter to D.C. Bar Membership

It is with tremendous pride and gratitude that we announce the Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll and High Honor Roll Members for 2011. As you know, as part of the National Celebration of Pro Bono for 2011, we invited all D.C. Bar members and others authorized to perform pro bono work in D.C. to provide information about their pro bono service so that they could be recognized for their critical contributions to residents of our community in need. The D.C. Access to Justice Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program have reviewed the submissions and provided us with the names of those attorneys who have qualified for inclusion on the Honor Roll.

We are delighted that over three thousand attorneys have reported performing fifty hours or more of pro bono work in 2011. Even more impressive, over two thousand of those attorneys reported performing one hundred hours or more of pro bono work in 2011, qualifying them for inclusion on the High Honor Roll. Honor Roll members represent a broad swath of the legal community. On the list are attorneys from large, small and mid-sized firms, federal government agencies, public interest organizations and solo practitioners. We have long recognized that the D.C. legal community leads the nation in its commitment to helping those who cannot afford counsel. This impressive demonstration of dedication and generosity through service to others, is further evidence that our legal community is devoted to striving to provide equal access to justice for all.

The Honor Roll will be posted on the Courts' website on Monday, March 26, 2012 at <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/about/probonohonorroll/main.jsf>.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Eric T. Washington in black ink.

Eric T. Washington
Chief Judge
District of Columbia Court of Appeals

Handwritten signature of Lee F. Satterfield in black ink.

Lee F. Satterfield
Chief Judge
Superior Court of the District of Columbia

Open to All ♦ Trusted by All ♦ Justice for All



District of Columbia Courts
 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Room 6680
 Washington, D.C. 20001
 202-879-1700 Office
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October 24, 2011

Darrell G. Mottley, Esq.
 President, D.C. Bar
 1100 13th Street NW, Suite 1200
 Washington, DC 20005

Dear President Mottley:

As part of the National Celebration of Pro Bono this week, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia will launch a ***“Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll.”*** This new initiative will recognize the crucial pro bono contributions of members of the D.C. Bar and others authorized to perform pro bono work in the District of Columbia, including federal government attorneys. We hope that the D.C. Bar will join us in promoting this effort by informing its members of the honor roll.

The D.C. legal community is by far the most committed in the nation to providing pro bono legal services to those in need. Although we have extraordinary attorneys who provide free legal services as their full-time work, as you know we desperately need attorneys in private and government practice to help cover the justice gap that has only deepened as our neighbors continue to struggle.

The District of Columbia Courts are mindful of the many challenges faced by pro se litigants attempting to navigate our court system without counsel. For this reason Rule 6.1 of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct calls on D.C. Bar members to provide 50 hours or more of pro bono service per year. We want to acknowledge those who comply with or exceed that goal through the Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll.

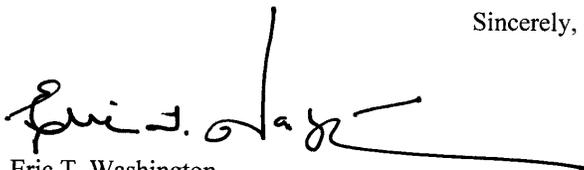
To be included in the Honor Roll, D.C. Bar members and others who are authorized to perform pro bono work in the District of Columbia should submit an online form available at <http://www.probono.net/dc/honor-roll>, and include a declaration that they have provided 50 hours or more of pro bono work in the calendar year that will end December 31, 2011. Lawyers who perform 100 hours or more may be included in the High Honor Roll. Registration for the Honor Roll ends on January 31, 2012. Participating attorneys will be recognized on the Courts’ website and elsewhere. We also expect that law firms and government agencies will recognize those attorneys who are named to the Honor Roll.

Open to All ♦ Trusted by All ♦ Justice for All

Letter to D.C. Bar President Mottley
October 24, 2011
Page Two

We applaud the generosity of pro bono attorneys, and the firms and government agencies that encourage their efforts. Because of their contributions, thousands of the District's most vulnerable residents have an advocate by their side when in court, so that their rights are protected. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Capital Honor Roll is a lengthy list!

Sincerely,



Eric T. Washington
Chief Judge
District of Columbia Court of Appeals
of Columbia



Lee F. Satterfield
Chief Judge
Superior Court of the District

CC: Ms. Monika Kalra Varma
Executive Director, D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program
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ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOUNDATION



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