

pro bono connection

An update from The ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service

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Suzanne E. Turner

Suzanne E. Turner: Taking Pro Bono International

When Suzanne Turner received the ABA Pro Bono Publico Award in 1992, she was a young associate in the Philadelphia law firm of Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll. She started her law career at the firm in 1986 and then accepted a one-year clerkship with U.S. District Court Judge Edmund V. Ludwig of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania in 1987. As a clerk for Judge Ludwig, Turner created the Plaintiff's Employment Panel, which provided pro bono legal assistance for plaintiffs who otherwise would represent themselves in claiming employment discrimination or filing actions under the Rehabilitation Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act. Sixteen years later, this program is still up and running.

When Turner returned to Ballard Spahr in 1988, she arrived armed to make a pitch for creating a firm-wide pro bono policy and a pro bono coordinator position. She envisioned that the firm's pro bono manager would concentrate on doing pro bono cases and facilitating opportunities for other attorneys in the firm to do pro bono. When Turner approached the senior partner at her firm—suggesting that she was the ideal candidate for the position—she was delighted to learn that the detailed presentation she had prepared was unnecessary. The firm had been thinking about creating such a position but no one had ever developed a proposal. As Turner recounts the incident, she was in the right place at the right time.

Turner always knew that she wanted to become a lawyer who fought for social change. As she describes it, "Whatever drew me to the law in the first place is what drew me to pro bono work." She

always intended to be a public interest lawyer and her experience in law school solidified this intention. When she discovered she could do public interest law in a law firm, this seemed like a particularly good fit.

Under Turner's leadership, Ballard Spahr's pro bono program grew and flourished. From a fledgling project, it developed into a strong part of the firm's culture and continued to expand in size and in the depth of subject matters and cases. During her tenure at the firm, Turner also served as head of the Public Interest Section of the Philadelphia Bar Association and as board chair of the Bar's Volunteers for the Indigent Program. She was awarded the Fidelity Award in 1996, the Philadelphia Bar Association's highest honor for public service, and in 2001 the Pennsylvania Legal Services program's Striving Toward Excellence Award.

When Turner had the opportunity to move to London with her family in 1999, she continued working for the firm on a part-time basis while she adjusted to a new continent. In London, Turner has demonstrated her ongoing dedication to pro bono and public service. She worked as a legal consultant for the international human rights group Interights. In this capacity, she prepared a comparative study of the delivery of legal aid in Europe and worked on access to justice and right to counsel issues. Turner spent time as a visiting fellow at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London, where she worked on an international comparative study of pro bono work. She has also studied the need for increasing funding

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2004 Pro Bono Publico Award Nominations

The Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service is seeking nominations for the 2004 ABA Pro Bono Publico Awards of individual lawyers and institutions in the legal profession that have demonstrated outstanding commitment to volunteer legal services for the poor and disadvantaged. Five awards will be presented at the Pro Bono Publico Awards Assembly Luncheon on Monday, August 9, 2004 at the ABA Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia.

Candidates are legal professionals

who commit their talent and training to improve the quality of justice for those unable to afford a lawyer. Some will be nominated for their longtime dedication to and leadership on behalf of the delivery of pro bono legal services to the poor. Others, newer to the field, might be nominated for their creative approaches to the delivery of volunteer legal services or their commitment to representing low-income persons. One of the awards is designated the Ann Liechty Pro Bono Child Custody Award. This award honors

individual lawyers who have enhanced the lives of children by improving or delivering volunteer legal services to children in custody proceedings.

Nominations are due by March 10, 2004. You can download nomination forms at www.abaprobono.org where you will also find the award criteria and information on the selection process and former award recipients. Call Dorothy Jackson at 312-988-5766, with questions or for more information.

Mark Your Calendars: 2004 Equal Justice Conference— *Renewing Our Commitment to Justice*

Registration is now open for the 2004 Equal Justice Conference, which will be held April 15 - 17, 2004 at the Hilton Atlanta Hotel. The Equal Justice Conference brings together advocates from all components of the legal community to discuss justice issues as they relate to the delivery of services to poor, low and moderate-income individuals in need of legal assistance. Through plenary sessions, workshops, networking opportunities and special programming,

the conference provides a wide range of learning and sharing experiences for all attendees.

The 2004 Equal Justice Conference is focused on ***Renewing Our Commitment to Justice***. The core theme is **partnering to make a difference to clients and communities**. The main conference will explore partnerships that must be created, resources that must be developed, and new issues facing clients. The Conference provides essential resources

to pro bono and legal services program staff, bar leaders, law firm representatives, judges, corporate counsel, court administrators, pro bono lawyers, paralegals, and many others.

For details on the conference, including a tentative agenda and information on several discount registration opportunities, visit www.equaljusticeconference.org. You can download a registration form from there, or register on-line

We hope to see you there!

Suzanne E. Turner

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for public interest organizations and has become a leader in examining how the private bar can best provide pro bono assistance where gaps in the legal services delivery system exist.

As she made the transition to life in London with her husband and two daughters (aged 8 and 3), Turner was offered a position as Pro Bono Partner at the law firm of Dechert LLP in October 2003. Dechert is an international law firm with approximately 750 lawyers in 17 offices (6 in Europe and 11 in the U.S.). Turner now works full time running Dechert's pro bono program—managing a wide diversity of projects that come in,

working on cross-office initiatives, and personally handling a large pro bono caseload. Many of her own cases focus on access to justice, right to counsel and fair trial issues.

Turner has already made a strong impression on the pro bono and legal community in the U.K. She was named one of the "Top 100 Hot Lawyers" by The Lawyer Magazine in January 2004. She serves on the board of the Solicitors Pro Bono Group—an organization that promotes pro bono work throughout the U.K.

Turner continues to see the true value of pro bono as being able to make a concrete contribution to people in need. "Helping a person who can't afford legal services by giving them access to

a lawyer gives them access to a whole system of justice. The way a doctor can help someone physically or a social worker can help someone's mental health, attorneys can provide justice for people."

She notes that though the pressures of billable hours in firm life are real, law firms that develop policies that value pro bono, and then put these policies into action, can make substantial profits and fulfill their roles as corporate citizens at the same time.

Suzanne Turner feels lucky to be able to carry the pro bono message with her to Europe, while still impacting pro bono in America through Dechert's U.S. offices. She is confident that pro bono will always play a critical part of her professional career.

Pro Bono Policy Updates

Nevada Supreme Court Approves Pro Bono Amendment to Code of Judicial Conduct

On October 28, 2003, the Nevada Supreme Court amended the commentary to Canon 4C(3) of the Code of Judicial Conduct to eliminate language that may discourage members of the judiciary from assisting legal services organizations in the recruitment of attorneys or law firms to provide pro bono legal services. The Court affirmed that the provision of pro bono legal services furthers the administration of justice by improving access to the courts. The commentary to Canon 4C(3) now states explicitly that:

A judge may solicit membership or endorse or encourage membership efforts for an organization devoted to the improvement of the law, the legal system or the administration of justice as long as the solicitation cannot reasonably be perceived as coercive and is not essentially a fund-raising mechanism.

The American Bar Association has formed a Joint Commission to Evaluate the ABA Model Code of Judicial Conduct and the Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service intends to submit comments recommending changes to the Model Code's Canon 4C that are consistent with the type of changes made in Nevada.

Washington State Amends RPC 6.1

Effective September 1, 2003, the Supreme Court of Washington amended its Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) 6.1 to

include an aspirational thirty (30) hour attorney pro bono contribution. The new RPC 6.1 partly tracks the ABA Model Rule 6.1 by including a stated number of aspirational hours, but differs from the model rule's 50 hours.

The Washington rule provides a vehicle for voluntary reporting of pro bono activities on the Washington State Bar Association annual fee statement, and also institutes a recognition award program for lawyers who contribute at least 50 hours of pro bono each year.

New York State Office of Courts Administration Releases Pro Bono Report

The New York State Unified Court System published two highly anticipated reports in January 2004 under the title: *The Future of Pro Bono in New York*. Volume One is the *Report on the 2002 Pro Bono Activities of the New York State Bar*. This report summarizes the results of the 2002 statewide survey on attorney pro bono activity. The survey found that 46% of New York State's attorneys performed pro bono work for the poor in 2002 and the average number of hours spent by attorneys who performed this pro bono work was 41.3 hours.

Volume Two is the *Report and Recommendations from the New York State Unified Court System's Pro Bono Convocations*. This report summarized the series of four pro bono convocations held around the state in 2002 in order to "brainstorm issues and develop tangible, feasible ideas and strategies for expand-

ing pro bono service in New York." The findings from the *Report* are:

- A need exists to increase pro bono services in New York State
- A formal statewide initiative is necessary and desirable
- All stakeholders should be involved in the statewide program that is developed to expand pro bono
- The Judiciary should have a significant role in the statewide program, but local leadership, design, implementation and control are essential for a comprehensive and workable program
- Pro Bono service should be voluntary

Copies of the full reports are available at: www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/

Wyoming Adopts CLE Credit for Pro Bono Activity

Rule 4 from the *Rules for Continuing Legal Education of Members of the Wyoming State Bar* was recently amended to include continuing legal education (CLE) credit for pro bono activity. A maximum of three hours of accredited CLE may be granted to lawyers who provide pro bono representation or mentoring activities that are approved by the Wyoming Pro Bono Organization. An attorney may receive one hour of CLE credit for every five hours of pro bono work, with the number of CLE credits not to exceed three per year. Other states that are actively offering CLE credit as a way to encourage pro bono activity include New York, Tennessee and Washington.

Pro Bono Connection is a biannual update by the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service for the news and information exchange needs of pro bono supporters. The views expressed in *Pro Bono Connection* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policies of the American Bar Association. The contents of this newsletter have not been approved by the ABA House of Delegates and do not constitute ABA policy.

Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service – Debbie Segal, **Chair**; Hon. Pamela J. Brown; S. Kendall Butterworth; Mary M. Connolly; Ivan Fong; Kathleen J. Hopkins; E. Barry Johnson; J. Tate London; L. Jonathan Ross; and Mark I. Schickman; **Board Liaison** – General Earl E. Anderson; **Committee Counsel** – Steven B. Scudder; **Assistant Committee Counsel** – Marilyn J. Smith; **Assistant Staff Director** – Dorothy Jackson; **Administrative Assistant** – Tamaara Mason; **Center for Pro Bono Director** – Dina Merrell.

2004 Equal Justice Conference Preview



New Equal Justice Scholarship Program Unveiled at the 2004 Equal Justice Conference

Under the leadership of Michael Pratt, former Pro Bono Committee member and current SCLAID liaison to the Committee, and the generous support of eight law firms and one corporation, the Equal Justice Conference (EJC) Scholarship Program is being launched in 2004. The EJC Scholarship Program gives people who would not otherwise be able to afford to attend the annual ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference an opportunity to participate. The purpose of the EJC Scholarship Program is to subsidize the attendance of full-time pro bono program managers/staff and new lawyers participating in post-graduate public service fellowships (including Americorps lawyers)—two groups that routinely have found it financially difficult to attend. Scholarships up to \$1,000 will be provided to help underwrite the travel and accommodation costs for each recipient.

As of January 28, 2004, the following law firms and corporation have generously pledged their support to this program. Those firms highlighted in bold will have a scholarship designated in their name due to the large size of their contribution.

Brown & Hutchinson (Rochester, NY)
Epstein, Becker, Green, Wickliff & Hall (Houston, TX)
 Honeywell International (Morristown, NJ)
 King & Spalding (Atlanta, GA)
 Kutak Rock (Omaha, NE)
 Nelson Mullins Riley Scarborough LLP (Columbia, SC)
Perkins Coie (San Francisco, CA)
 Polsinelli, Shalton & Welte (Kansas City, MO)
 Rawle & Henderson (Philadelphia, PA)
 Willman & Arnold (Pittsburgh, PA)
 Williams, Mullen, Clark & Dobbins (Richmond, VA)

If your firm is interested in donating money to the EJC Scholarship Program in future years please contact Dorothy Jackson at 312-988-5766.

Programming

Over 106 events are scheduled for the 2004 Equal Justice Conference. This includes networking meetings, pre-conference events and eighty-six workshops. The Access to Justice Chairs meeting will be held on Friday, April 16. In addition to the special meeting programming, Access to Justice meeting participants will be able to attend two Equal Justice Conference sessions of their choice over the course of the day.

Closing Plenary Session

ABA President Dennis Archer will speak at the conference closing plenary on Saturday morning, April 17, at 10:30 a.m. His keynote remarks will be followed by a panel presentation entitled: **Community Leaders and Lawyers Working Together: A United Vision for Challenging Poverty.**

Excursions

The Atlanta Host Committee has organized a tour of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum on Saturday, April 17, 2004.

Don't leave Atlanta without visiting the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum. Both attractions are located just a few miles from the Atlanta Hilton Hotel, where the conference is being held. The Atlanta Host Committee will arrange for shuttle service to both sites immediately after the conference ends Saturday afternoon.

Dr. King's birth home, gravesite, and Ebenezer Baptist Church are among the attractions at the historic Auburn Avenue Martin Luther King Historic Site (www.nps.gov/malu/). A museum dedicated to Dr. King's life contains original notes from his sermons and other memorabilia.

The Carter Library and Museum (www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/) is one of only 10 presidential libraries in the country. The museum celebrates his life and presidency with photos and memorabilia and includes his 2002 Nobel Peace Prize that recently went on display.

For continuously updated information on the conference programming, schedule and special events, visit us at www.equaljusticeconference.org

ATTENTION: We are always curious and eager to hear news from your lives and your communities about new pro bono initiatives. We would be happy to share your pro bono thoughts and questions in our next issue of **Pro Bono Connection**. Please email us at: smithma@staff.abanet.org