



**Message from the Chair, Alvin W. Thompson**

"To understand the importance of volunteering in America, imagine a world without any volunteers."

That sentence really caught my eye as I was reading a draft of a report related to the ABA's Commission on the Renaissance of Idealism in the Legal Profession. The Commission was formed this year by ABA President Michael S. Greco, who issued a call for a "renaissance of idealism in the legal profession -- a recommitment to the noblest principles that define the profession: providing legal representation to assist the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged; and performing public service that enhances the common good."

The ABA Section of Business Law has a rich history of supporting these principles and its members who put them into practice. Our [Pro Bono Committee](#) serves as the locus for the [ABC \(A Business Commitment\)](#) Project, a national network of pro bono business law projects that assists the poor with financial and debt concerns, provides legal assistance on formation and governance issues to nonprofit agencies, and supports small business owners in economically challenged areas. We always want to do more as a Section in this area and to help our members do more. If you have ideas or suggestions as to how we can, please contact the Pro Bono Committee Chairs Peter Carson or Kathleen Hopkins. Their contact information can be found on the [committee's Web site](#).

Beyond the traditional definition of pro bono legal service, there are numerous other kinds of opportunities for members of the legal profession to serve their communities. By serving on nonprofit boards and in community organizations, attorneys also convey the message that they care deeply for the well being of their fellow citizens.

The Commission's Web site states: "Many of today's young lawyers enter the practice of law expecting to find opportunities to engage in these kinds of activities. Yet many soon become disappointed and frustrated as the demands of their law practice severely limit the time and opportunities they have to contribute to society. For veteran lawyers as well, the pressures and pace of law practice often make it difficult to participate in the life of their communities." The Web site also observes that: "If we are to change this situation, lawyers must be able to strike a better balance in their lives and law practices. The key to that balance is freeing up time -- in law firms, in government offices, in any setting where a lawyer practices law -- for lawyers to perform public service, to volunteer their legal training to those in need, to help improve their communities, and in the process to find greater fulfillment in their legal careers."

The Section's Council has voted to co-sponsor the Commission's resolution to the House of Delegates resolving that the ABA urge all lawyers to contribute to the public good through engagement in community service activities in addition to their obligation to deliver pro bono legal service, and that the ABA also urge legal providers and employers to adopt policies and practices that afford lawyers the time and opportunity to engage in such activities.

I encourage each of you to [visit the Web site of the Renaissance Commission](#) and follow the developments of this important initiative. I also hope that each of you will join me in reflecting on the principles the Commission espouses, appreciating how these principles have enriched our careers and our lives and looking for ways we can make them a more visible part of the future of our profession.

**Alvin W. Thompson**  
**Chair, Section of Business Law**