

May 8, 2015 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT PRO BONO COMMITTEE LAUNCHES NEW PRO BONO PLEDGE

The Fifth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee has launched the Pro Bono Pledge to encourage and recognize lawyers providing free legal assistance to low-income individuals and families in the Fifth Judicial Circuit of Illinois. This committee is a group of lawyers and judges working to enlist, educate and recognize attorneys dedicated to pro bono work.

In a letter sent to attorneys in the Fifth Circuit, Committee Chair Angelica W. Wawrzynek of Tapella & Eberspacher acknowledged the longstanding tradition in the circuit of providing pro bono legal assistance. But given the increase in the number of unrepresented individuals and families in civil legal matters, she also stressed the need for more pro bono assistance. By signing the Pledge, attorneys can commit to helping meet this critical need.

The Pledge calls on law firms and corporate legal departments to:

- 1. Encourage their attorneys and legal staff to provide pro bono legal services and in doing so, provide an environment which is hospitable to the rendition of such services;
- 2. Designate a primary pro bono point of contact within the firm or corporate law department;
- 3. Consider adopting a written pro bono policy; and
- 4. Recognize attorneys and legal staff who participate in pro bono services, as appropriate.

The Pledge was formally launched on March 19, 2015. "The first step towards increasing pro bono assistance in the Circuit is to create an environment which supports and encourages pro bono legal work," says Wawrzynek. "Whether your law firm or corporation has a longstanding commitment to pro bono services, or you are willing to help promote pro bono services, we hope that you will take this Pledge on behalf of your law firm or corporation." Interested attorneys and law offices can sign the pledge at www.pili.org/5thcircuit.

In addition to the launch of the Pledge, the Fifth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee also provides programs and resources to promote pro bono services. On Friday, May 15th, the Committee is offering a complementary half day CLE program at the Charleston Carnegie Public Library about ethical issues and hot topics in pro bono. More information and registration for this program is also available at www.pili.org/5thcircuit.

The ultimate goal of the Fifth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee is to expand the reach of legal aid to poor and underrepresented communities. It was launched on May 31, 2013 in partnership with Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation and the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI). Pro Bono Committees in Illinois' Third, Sixth, Tenth, and Fourteenth Judicial Circuits have also launched similar Pro Bono Pledges. More information about the Pro Bono Pledge is available at: www.pili.org/pro-bono/pro-bono-pledge.

About PILI: PILI's mission is to cultivate a lifelong commitment to public interest law and pro bono service within the Illinois legal community to expand the availability of legal services for people, families and communities in need. PILI envisions a legal community with a deeply rooted culture of service, where law students, lawyers and legal professionals at all stages of their careers engage in public interest law or pro bono work, and remain committed to addressing the unmet legal needs of the poor and underrepresented.