

Office of the Mayor



CITY OF
PEORIA

Proclamation

WHEREAS, approximately half of the low-income households in Illinois have one or more legal problems, but yet only one out of every six of low-income persons are able to obtain assistance for their legal problems including complex matters with potentially serious consequences such as evictions, domestic violence, child custody, bankruptcy and divorces; and

WHEREAS, even though in 2013, 30,751 Illinois lawyers provided close to 2.1 million pro bono legal services hours and 16,266 Illinois lawyers donated over \$14 million dollars to help fund additional legal services, there is still an unmet need for legal assistance; and

WHEREAS, Prairie State Legal Services provides civil legal services at no cost to qualified poor, elderly, and people with disabilities within the City of Peoria as well as throughout 36 counties in Illinois, and these legal services impact basic human needs, including physical safety, access to health care and other government benefits, and adequate housing, but Prairie State cannot meet the need for these services alone, and enlists the assistance of pro bono attorneys to help meet the need in the Peoria community; and

WHEREAS, the Peoria County Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee is dedicated to supporting Prairie States Legal Services with its member attorneys who volunteer their time and services in the Prairie State referral program; providing legal assistance to the Divorce Clinic, Wills Clinic, housing and guardianship representations, the Tornado Victim Legal Support program; working with community agencies on expunging old criminal records that impede the road to gainful employment; and, assisting in other efforts requested by Prairie State Legal Services and the Peoria community; and

WHEREAS, Caterpillar's Pro Bono Program provides free legal assistance through its attorneys and paralegals' participation in a number of clinics on a variety of issues, including divorce, wills, powers of attorney, and immigration; and educates the public on the concept of the rule of law through the Street Law Program for local high school students; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the unmet need for legal assistance throughout the counties in the Tenth Judicial Circuit, the Tenth Judicial Pro Bono Committee was established in October of 2013, to increase equal access to justice by raising awareness of the need for free legal services; identifying and reducing barriers in the provision of free legal services; promoting, enhancing and increasing pro bono legal services through recruitment and recognition of local attorneys who participate in existing and new pro bono programs for low-income individuals and families within the Tenth Judicial Circuit; and

WHEREAS, National Celebrate Pro Bono Week aims to expand the delivery of pro bono legal services and increase access to justice; and

WHEREAS, the promise of equal justice under law is the most fundamental tenet of our justice system; and

WHEREAS, the City Council and the Mayor of the City of Peoria support the goal of educating the public about the extensive work local lawyers are doing and to encourage more support both by volunteering and by donating financially to support pro bono work and the legal aid community; and

WHEREAS, the City Council and the Mayor of the City of Peoria do hereby commend the legal community and these legal services provider and pro bono programs for their work in providing legal services in our society;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jim Ardis, Mayor of the City of Peoria, Illinois, do hereby proclaim that:

**THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 19TH TO OCTOBER 25TH BE DECLARED
NATIONAL CELEBRATE PRO BONO WEEK**

In witness whereof, the City of Peoria, Illinois, has caused this certificate to be sealed with the Corporate Seal of the City and signed by its Mayor.

Dated this 14th day of October 2014 A.D.




MAYOR