

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COMMITTEE'S PRO BONO PLEDGE

What is the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee?

The Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee is a group comprised of lawyers and judges that strives to enhance equal access to justice by encouraging and promoting pro bono work in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. The Committee was launched on February 28, 2012 and is being chaired by Rock Island attorney, Tom Blade. The Committee was organized by the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) in partnership with Prairie State Legal Services.

What is the Pro Bono Pledge?

The Pro Bono Pledge was developed by the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee to more fully engage in pro bono those law firms and corporate legal departments with offices the Fourteenth Circuit. Through it, we hope to recognize the great pro bono already being done by many firms and corporations in the Fourteenth Circuit, and we hope to build on that commitment by inspiring other firms and corporations to enhance their pro bono commitment.

If I already do pro bono in the Fourteenth Circuit, do I still need to sign the Pledge?

If you already doing pro bono work in our Circuit, thank you! We very much appreciate what you are already doing and we do hope you will still sign the Pledge. This way, your commitment to pro bono can be recognized and that might also encourage others to join you in these efforts.

What kind of pro bono counts for purposes of the Pro Bono Pledge?

For purposes of the Pledge, we are using the Illinois Supreme Court's definition of pro bono. Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756(f) defines pro bono as legal services to persons of limited means; legal services to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental or educational organizations in matters designed to address the needs of persons of limited means; legal services to charitable, religious, civic or community organizations in furtherance of their organizational purpose; or training intended to benefit legal aid organizations or lawyers who provide pro bono services." These services can be done on your own through direct client contact, as a referral from a local bar association or through Prairie State.

What am I committing to if I sign the Pro Bono Pledge?

The Pledge calls on law firms and corporate legal departments to: (1) encourage our 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.

What will happen once I sign the Pledge?

Your completed Pledge will be shared with Prairie State and PILI. Prairie State may contact you or your firm or corporation's designee to be sure that they have information for all of your attorneys and to determine how best to contact your attorneys regarding pro bono opportunities. PILI will add your law firm or corporation's new to the running list of Pledge signatories.

Where can I see who else has signed onto the Pledge?

The Committee has its own webpage on PILI's website at www.pili.org/14thcircuit. From there, you can find out more about the Committee, the Pledge and see the running list of those who sign onto the Pledge.

Is the Pro Bono Pledge only happening in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit?

PILI has launched five other pro bono committees in other judicial circuits across the state. Four other circuits have launched or are in the process of launching their own versions of the Pledge, including the Third, Fifth, Sixth, and Tenth Circuits. If you also practice in any of those circuits, you might be separately contacted regarding the Pledge in that circuit.

Who can I talk with if I have additional questions?

You may contact Michael Bergmann at 312-832-5129 or mbergmann@pili.org.