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**SAN ANTONIO LAWYER ELIZABETH COPELAND
RECEIVES NATIONAL PRO BONO AWARD
FROM AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION TAX SECTION**

WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan. 6, 2009 -- The American Bar Association Section of Taxation presented its annual Janet Spragens Pro Bono Award to San Antonio lawyer Elizabeth Copeland during a luncheon Jan 10 at the section's 2009 Midyear Meeting in New Orleans. Copeland is a shareholder in the San Antonio firm Oppenheimer Blend Harrison & Tate, Inc.

The Janet Spragens Pro Bono Award, named after the late American University Law professor who greatly contributed to ensuring representation for low-income taxpayers, is presented each year to an individual lawyer or law firm that has demonstrated outstanding and sustained commitment to *pro bono* (free) legal services, particularly with respect to federal and state tax law.

"Elizabeth Copeland sets the standard for *pro bono* work in the tax area," said William J. Wilkins, section chair. "She saw a need to assist unrepresented taxpayers in U.S. Tax Court, and single-handedly set up a program to do just that," he said. "Her

work in Texas is a model for other states to replicate, and is a testament to her commitment and dedication to helping taxpayers,” said Wilkins.

Copeland established the first state-wide Tax Court Pro Bono Program in Texas. The program encourages lawyers to offer *pro bono* consultation services to unrepresented, or *pro se*, taxpayers at calendar calls. Working with the U.S. Tax Court, Copeland set up programs in each of the Texas cities in which the court sits, and oversees the volunteer participation at each location. Lawyer volunteers mediate disputes between the IRS and Tax Court petitioners.

Copeland has been active in the ABA Tax Section’s Pro Bono Committee, and has chaired the Low Income Taxpayer Committee’s Tax Court Subcommittee. She is vice chair to the Committee on Appointments to the Tax Court and a member of the section’s Court Procedure and Practice Committee. Copeland is a council member of the State Bar of Texas and chairs its Tax Section Pro Bono Committee. She is also active in the San Antonio Bar Association and the Bexar County Women’s Bar Association.

Copeland was recognized in *The Best Lawyers in America 2009*, and named a “Texas Super Lawyer” in the area of tax law by *Texas Monthly* and *Law & Politics* magazines. She also received mention as one of San Antonio’s Best Tax Law Attorneys in *Scene in SA* magazine.

“Many *pro se* petitioners in the Tax Court are unfamiliar with Court procedures,” said Chief Judge John Colvin of the U.S. Tax Court. The Tax Court through its recognition provisions has actively encouraged clinical and *pro bono* programs to assist *pro se* petitioners. “The Texas program that Elizabeth developed is a wonderful success story,” he said. “Petitioners who have few if any alternatives get useful advice and

support in navigating the process, and lawyers who participate are able to provide meaningful *pro bono* assistance,” said Chief Judge Colvin. The ABA Tax Section is assisting interested state and local bar associations in setting up programs similar to the one in Texas.

The ABA Section of Taxation Pro Bono Award was initiated in 2002 at the recommendation of the section’s Special Pro Bono Task Force. Its name was changed to the Janet Spragens Pro Bono Award in 2007. For more information about the Midyear Meeting, visit the ABA Section of Taxation Web site, <http://meetings.abanet.org/meeting/tax/MID09/>.

The American Bar Association Section of Taxation is the largest professional association of tax lawyers, with approximately 21,000 members nationwide. Its goals include helping taxpayers better understand their rights and obligations under the tax laws and working to achieve a simplified tax system that is equitable and efficient.

With more than 400,000 members, the American Bar Association is the largest voluntary professional membership organization in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.