

- My name is Melissa Birks and I'm speaking to you today as a client of the Justice Entrepreneurs Project, a program of the Chicago Bar Foundation. The JEP is an incubator for recent law school graduates to start their own socially conscious law firms. The goal is to expand legal services to low- and moderate-income people by developing innovative new models through which lawyers in solo or small practices can sustainably provide affordable services.
- I believe I would qualify as a "moderate-income" person, earning too much to qualify for pro bono legal services but not enough to be able to afford the market rate.
- I was lucky enough to hear about the JEP through work. I work in the marketing department of a Chicago law firm. A partner at the firm chaired the steering committee that made the JEP a reality last year. I had written items about the JEP, so when I needed help with a contract, I turned to it.
- I was quickly teamed up with a smart, efficient young lawyer who, I believe, went above and beyond with my case.
- I paid a very reasonable flat rate for his service.
- There was no "crisis of confidence" in the quality of the lawyer. He listened to me, sorted out a complicated contract, and was assertive on my behalf when I needed him to be.
- I only wish more people knew about the JEP; I think it could benefit a large segment of the underserved population who are, like me, in the moderate-income range.
- I welcome your questions.