

DIALOGUE

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From the Chair...

By A. Michael Pratt

Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service

2009 National Celebration of Pro Bono a Major Success

2009 Review

When the Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service announced its plans for the first National Celebration of Pro Bono, many questions were raised about the value of a nationally coordinated strategy for recognizing pro bono across the country. Under the leadership of then Chairman Mark Schickman, the Committee believed that the initiative, modeled after the ABA's Law Week strategy—dependent on local projects held during a designated timeframe—would capture the interest and energy of the legal community. That confidence bore fruit during the week of October 25-31, 2009 with hundreds of event sponsors and individuals supporting and coordinating more than 600 exciting and well-attended events in 48 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia and Canada.

The confluence of two circumstances made the timing of the National Celebration of Pro Bono particularly important: the increasing need for pro bono services as economic conditions worsened, and the unprecedented response of attorneys to meet this need. Although national in breadth, this initiative provided an opportunity for legal organizations across the country to commemorate collaboratively the vitally important contributions of America's lawyers and to recruit the many additional volunteers required to meet the growing demand.

The Pro Bono Committee undertook this initiative to provide a format for showcasing the incredible difference that pro bono lawyers make to our nation, to our system of justice, to our communities and, most of all, to the clients they serve. With the enthusiastic involvement of national, statewide and local partners, from all components of the legal profession, the National Pro Bono Celebration created a wave of positive energy about the pro bono

movement in this country. Pro bono lawyers were recruited and trained, new projects were started, volunteers were recognized for their outstanding service, law students were exposed to the power of pro bono and new partnerships were developed. To top it off, there was an outpouring of positive media exposure in the printed press and on radio, television and the internet.

Here are some important statistics regarding the diversity of sponsors and the scope of Celebration event types:

Sponsors	
Law Schools	96
Bar Associations	134
Pro Bono Programs	105
Legal Services Programs	126
Law Firms	21
Others (corporate law departments, government attorney offices, courts, other non-profits)	25

Event Types (overview)	
Continuing Legal Education Program	111
Fundraiser	13
Governmental Proclamations	15
Legal Clinic	130
Media	18
New Initiative Kick-off	7
Planning Session	5
Recognition Event	55
Recruitment Event	59
Social Event (no recognition component)	42
Seminar	63
Webinar	6

These statistics reflect the depth of interest, the creativity and the thoughtfulness of the legal community and, most of all, indicates the profession's incredible commitment to pro bono.

2010 National Celebration of Pro Bono

*Start planning **now** for the 2010 Celebration – October 24-30.*

Immediately following the 2009 Celebration we surveyed our many constituents – those who participated and those who did not – to assess

whether to go forward with the National Celebration of Pro Bono on an annual basis and, if so, during what week. The results are in and the overwhelming consensus is to go forward each year during the last week of October. There is no perfect time that will work for everyone and we heard the collective message that, with early notice and promotional assistance, groups will do all they can to make it work.

In the next few weeks the Celebration website – www.celebrateprobono.org – will be updated with new resources, materials, ideas and other tools that will help you move forward with your 2010 Celebration planning. The revamped website will make available additional planning tips; more samples of proclamations, press releases and op-eds; categorized access to last year’s Celebration events; an upgraded Celebration store and much more. You can also sign up on the website to receive regular updates about Celebration planning activities.

We learned many lessons from the inaugural National Pro Bono Celebration, two of which I want to share with you here. First, work together whenever possible. Those groups who coordinated their activities, and planned and scheduled collaboratively, reported having the most overall success. Second, and a corollary to the first, is to be diversified in your planning in the context of what your community needs. Is recruitment a priority? Training? Client service through clinics? Reviewing and assessing your program, court and community pro bono needs will result in a more dynamic overall Celebration.

Thank you for Celebrating with the Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service in 2009. We look forward to seeing how the pro bono community celebrates in 2010.

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