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MESSAGE FROM PETER KNIGHT, PRO BONO PARTNER

The 2017 Results Are In...

Robinson+Cole's attorneys and professionals once again stepped up their efforts to provide legal services to the most needy individuals and non-profit organizations in our communities and beyond. Compared to the prior year, we saw a twenty percent increase in both the number of hours contributed (over 8,000) and the value of time dedicated (over \$3,000,000) to pro bono work. I attribute this positive trend to multiple factors:



It's easier to identify and open pro bono matters. Thanks to the efforts of the Pro Bono Committee and our great administrative and IT support staff, the work involved to identify, vet, staff, and open new pro bono matters has been streamlined. Our close ties to our pro bono partners, such as the Pro Bono Partnership, the Center for Children's Advocacy, Statewide Legal Services, the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, among others, help us easily identify worthy clients and deserving matters. New intake procedures through IOS simplify the approval and intake process.

There is unqualified support for pro bono work from Firm management. The Committee has been approached by R+C attorneys with proposed pro bono projects and cases that sometimes require a substantial commitment of time and occasionally financial support. Absent a conflict of interest or some other overriding concern, the answer has been a uniform "Yes." Lots of law firms espouse these principles, but not all live by them.

Robinson+Cole attorneys and professionals just do it. One of the Pro Bono Committee's missions is to promote and encourage individuals to dedicate their time to pro bono work. This is the easy part! We are fortunate enough to work at a firm where most of our lawyers consider pro bono to be a natural

and necessary extension of their practices.

But there's always more to be done. The need in our communities has never been greater, and more of our lawyers could be contributing their time. Next year at this time, the Pro Bono Committee hopes to be in a position to report that more of that need has been met by an even greater number of our lawyers and professionals.

OUR PRO BONO PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUE TO BRING US DESERVING CLIENTS AND INTERESTING MATTERS

Robinson+Cole attorneys and other professionals dedicate a substantial amount of time representing pro bono clients who cannot afford to pay us for our services. Before we take on any new client, however, we need to be sure they meet our pro bono criteria. This is important because we want to verify that "free" legal services are going to the truly needy, and also because we provide our firm-wide pro bono hours to national reporting agencies and to clients, and we want to ensure that the information we provide is accurate. At times, evaluating new pro bono clients and matters requires some leg-work at intake in order to vet an individual or organization's financial status before we can agree to take them on as a client. We have a number of pro bono partner organizations, however, who assist us with this vetting process. New matters that come to us from any of the more than a dozen of our referral agencies are essentially pre-approved as meeting our pro bono criteria. Having worked with these organizations over the years, we know that the clients they send to us are truly needy and deserving. The list of pre-approved pro bono referral providers, which the Pro Bono Committee recently reviewed and revised, can be found [here](#).

NEW CONNECTICUT FEDERAL COURT RULES ON PRO BONO APPOINTMENTS

Recent visitors to the Connecticut Federal Court website will have seen a prominent notice announcing the adoption of amendments to Local Rule 83.10 concerning pro bono appointments in civil cases. We circulated [a notice](#) regarding this new rule over the summer. The new rule provides that, in order to meet the growing need for legal representation of indigent litigants, all attorneys admitted to practice in Connecticut Federal Court and who have filed an appearance in the last three years will be eligible for assignment of a pro bono appointment in a civil case. The prior rule limited pro bono appointments to attorneys who opted-in and voluntarily included his or her name on a list of eligible attorneys. The court will continue that voluntary program, and when a new matter meets the court's pro bono criteria, those lawyers who opt-in to the voluntary program will be selected first. If no volunteer attorneys are available, the court will select pro bono counsel from the wider list of registered attorneys. In the event that you are selected for a pro bono appointment, the grounds for declining the appointment are very limited.

We recommend that all R+C attorneys admitted to, and appearing in, the federal court in Connecticut volunteer for the pro bono panel — especially our litigation associates. These cases provide invaluable experience for our litigators, and a strong volunteer showing will help maintain Robinson+Cole's well-deserved reputation among our local federal judiciary for its commitment to providing pro bono legal representation and to ensuring the orderly administration of justice in our federal courts.

One issue that we sometimes confront with pro bono court appointments, whether civil or criminal, are the potential costs associated with prosecuting the case. Particularly in matters involving medical or other scientific or technical issues, expert testimony might be necessary and can result in substantial costs. All of the federal courts provide for expert fee reimbursement to varying degrees, but before accepting an appointment, we need to have a clear understanding of what those fees might amount to.

While Connecticut is the only federal court in our primary practice geographies to adopt a mandatory program for admitted attorneys, the federal courts in Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and Florida all have voluntary pro bono programs. Information is available on the courts' respective websites.

LAWYERS FOR CHILDREN AMERICA ANNOUNCES NEW TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Many Robinson+Cole lawyers regularly represent children in neglect and abuse cases in juvenile court through our pro bono partner, Lawyers for Children America (LFCA). This is incredibly important and gratifying work that requires no substantive family law experience and is also highly manageable. In order to take a case, LFCA requires only that its volunteers attend a training session. These happen infrequently, but one is scheduled for February 14, 2018, at McCarter & English's Hartford office. [Contact me](#) for more information.

Many attorneys are eager to take on a pro bono case when their schedules permit, but it's often hard to get that timing right. The benefit of attending a training session and getting "qualified," whether through the LFCA, the CT Veterans Legal Center, or one of our other pro bono partners, is that these organizations typically have a roster of cases on hand at any given time, which makes it much easier to find a matter when you have some time to work on one. Please consider attending the LFCA session, or keep your eyes out for other similar training opportunities.

DVRO TEAM AGAIN DEMONSTRATES THE NEED FOR, AND POWER OF, LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Our thanks to Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) team member, Albina Yaikbaeva, for providing this moving summary of a life-changing case handled by the Team. The DVRO program continues to be one of the Firm's hallmark pro bono initiatives, and deservedly so.

"The DVRO team recently had the opportunity to offer much-needed assistance to a client who suffered through a decade of brutal physical abuse by her husband. In late December 2017, after a beating by her husband that left her upper body and head covered in bruises and welts, the client reached out to Greater Hartford Legal Aid for help. GHLA encouraged the client to document the incident with photos and to leave with her three young children for a domestic violence shelter. The client, whose husband had threatened her with deportation, losing custody of her children, and even death, was too afraid to leave him at that point. Three weeks later, she received her U.S. citizenship and decided to leave him. When she told her husband she wanted a divorce, he beat her and choked her, but she managed to call the police and escape to a shelter with her children. Once the client was in a safe house, our R+C team, led by Susan Masters, met with her to prepare her application for an order of protection. Less than a week later, the court held a hearing on the client's application, where she bravely testified in front of her husband about the abuse she suffered. Her credible testimony and foresight to document her abuse through photos and text messages helped Nuala Droney and Susan Masters convince the court that a full order of protection for one year, the maximum allowed under the law, was necessary. Because of this work, and Kelly Frye Barnett's support with difficult issues involving the client's children, the client will be protected as she tries to move into the next chapter of her life."

EMILEE MOONEY SCOTT HELPS AUERFARM RECOVER WATER CHARGES FROM CONNECTICUT

In a pro bono case involving a torturous title search of the property that constitutes the 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm in Bloomfield, Emilee Mooney Scott, a member of the firm's Environmental, Energy + Telecommunications Group, recently resolved a substantial claim against the State of Connecticut to recover water charges on behalf of our client, the 4-H farm. After a series of astronomical and unexpected water usage fees raised alarm, an investigation by the farm revealed the culprit to be a broken line on a property that once was part of the original Auerfarm parcel, but after a series of conveyances is now owned by the State. Through close examination of the property's complicated title history, Emilee was able to establish that maintenance of the water line was the State's responsibility. After filing an action with the Connecticut Claims Commissioner, Emilee and the State were able to negotiate a fair resolution that forgave usage charges, reimbursed the farm for related costs, and paid to fix the broken line. Our engagement also gave the 4-H farm an opportunity to get to know Emilee and resulted in her nomination and election to the Board! The 4-H farm was good enough to send us [a letter](#) thanking us for our help.

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