



THE
**CHICAGO
BAR
ASSOCIATION**

Circuit Court of Cook County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAWYERS OFFER FREE HELP FOR CHICAGO'S PRO SE LITIGANTS

CHICAGO, ILL. (May 29, 2013) -- A unique pro bono program dedicated to helping pro se (self-represented) litigants in First Municipal District civil jury cases will mark two years of success at a reception honoring volunteers on May 30, 2013.

The Municipal Court Pro Bono Panel Program is a collaboration of the Circuit Court of Cook County, The Chicago Bar Association (CBA), the Chicago Bar Foundation, CARPLS (a Chicago legal aid organization), the Chicago Legal Clinic (CLC), and area law firms. The program targets those litigants who are in need of trial counsel but who do not qualify for legal aid or have trouble finding representation from the private bar, especially in those cases where a jury demand has been filed and the other party is represented by an attorney.

Circuit Court of Cook County Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans said he is gratified by the program's success because it demonstrates the power of pro bono service. "These volunteer lawyers take time from their busy law practices to provide vital assistance to low income litigants," Evans said. "There is a tremendous need for these types of programs as judges continue to see an ever-increasing number of people without lawyers appearing in court."

Launched as a pilot with only four law firms, the Municipal Court Pro Bono Panel Program has grown to a roster of 13 law firms: Winston & Strawn, Jenner & Block, Neal Gerber & Eisenberg, Segal McCambridge Singer & Mahoney, Williams Montgomery & John, Kirkland and Ellis, DLA Piper, Denton US LLP, Skadden Arps, Baker McKenzie, Proskauer, Vedder Price and McDermott Will Emory.

More than 55 clients have received pro bono representation under the program since it began.

According to attorney Megan McClung, the liaison for the program and the CBA, the goals are to assist individual low-income litigants, improve the administration of justice and provide the opportunity for volunteer attorneys to gain trial and other litigation experience through pro bono service. Case types include consumer debt claims, breach of contract, or damages arising from a multi-car accident, and cases are referred at every stage of litigation, including after the case is assigned to trial.

McClung said, “More law firm participants are necessary to grow the Program and ensure that every case referred to the program receives pro bono help.”

The May 30, 2013, reception will take place at 5:30 p.m., hosted by Neal Gerber & Eisenberg to honor the participating law firms and outstanding volunteers. Chief Judge Evans will attend to recognize the program and its volunteers. Hon. E. Kenneth Wright, Jr., Presiding Judge of the First Municipal District will also attend. For more information about this event, contact Megan McClung at mhmclung@gmail.com.

To learn more about the Municipal Court Pro Bono Panel Program and become involved, please visit: <http://municourtpanel.illinoisprobono.org/>