

For Immediate Release

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State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project Salutes Volunteer Lawyers in Recognition of National Volunteer Week

Atlanta, GA (April 15, 2010) – In honor of National Volunteer Week 2010 “Celebrating People in Action,” the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project recognizes the dedicated volunteer lawyers in Georgia who help low-income people, senior citizens, servicemembers and veterans overcome potentially devastating legal problems such as foreclosure, bankruptcy, domestic violence, government red tape and more.

Sponsored by Points of Light Institute and HandsOn Network—the nation’s largest volunteer organizing network—National Volunteer Week was established in 1974 by former President Richard Nixon and has grown exponentially each subsequent year, with literally thousands of volunteer projects and special events scheduled throughout the week.

A 2008 Legal Needs Study commissioned by the Georgia Supreme Court Civil Justice Committee reveals that thousands of families in Georgia face legal problems every year without an attorney, and the need for free and reduced-fee legal help is rapidly increasing as the economic crisis continues.

“The current economic crisis has put an enormous strain on Georgia families, said Chief Justice Carol W. Hunstein of the Supreme Court of Georgia. “Some have even had to choose between hiring an attorney to help with an important legal need and paying the mortgage or putting food on the table. I am so proud of the attorneys in this state who are stepping up to the plate to meet the ever-increasing need. That they are generously continuing to provide pro bono services is a clear indication of the professionalism and commitment of our legal community.”

Volunteers do make a difference, especially in rural areas of the state. “In 2009, Georgia lawyers outside metro Atlanta helped over 800 low-income clients referred by GLSP, for no fee or a significantly reduced fee,” says Phyllis Holmen, Executive Director of Georgia Legal Services Program. “These volunteers resolved critical family problems, consumer scams, and disability claims. Their work delivered on our country’s promise of ‘justice for all.’”

National Volunteer Week 2010 “Celebrating People in Action” (April 18-24) provides an opportunity to recognize pro bono lawyers for their efforts.

To encourage and support volunteer lawyers throughout the year, the State Bar Pro Bono Project offers GeorgiaAdvocates.org, the online portal for legal professionals looking to volunteer for pro bono work. Legal professionals wishing to volunteer can join GeorgiaAdvocates.org by signing up at www.GeorgiaAdvocates.org/GOJC. Attorneys can also search for volunteer opportunities in Georgia at <http://www.georgiaadvocates.org/oppsguide>.

GeorgiaAdvocates.org makes it easy for volunteer attorneys to get involved in pro bono work no matter the size of the firm, saving them time and connecting them with opportunities, training events, mentors, and searchable libraries of practice resources they won't find anywhere else. Consumers can find state-based legal referrals, know-your-rights information and a variety of self-help tools on the companion site, www.LegalAid-GA.org.

More information on National Volunteer Week 2010 "Celebrating People in Action" can be found at <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/programs/more/nvw>.

About the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project

Co-sponsored by the State Bar of Georgia and Georgia Legal Services Program, the Pro Bono Project is headquartered at the Bar and involves private attorneys in representation of the poor in civil matters. The Project also provides information to lawyers on what programs are available when they want to volunteer. The Project gives technical assistance to local bar associations, legal aid programs, and pro bono programs.

About Pro Bono Net

Pro Bono Net is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to justice through increased volunteer lawyer participation and innovative use of technology. Founded in 1998, Pro Bono Net has created a powerful network of nonprofit legal aid providers, courts and bar associations across the United States and Canada. This network uses two Web-based platforms—www.probono.net and www.lawhelp.org—to recruit and manage volunteers, and to provide legal information and tools for low-income communities and the organizations that serve them. For more information, please visit www.probono.net.

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