



Lawyers make a difference for people and society. They solve problems, provide free legal help to the poor, and give time to many other community efforts.

how lawyers can and do help...

LAWYERS GIVE SERVICES



PRO BONO SERVICES

Lawyers volunteer to provide free legal services to low-income families or nonprofit agencies who serve those in need. It is one way to fulfill the duties in the Voluntary Pro Bono Standard.

LAWYERS GIVE MONEY



ACCESS TO JUSTICE FUND

Lawyers make donations to the Access to Justice Fund to support civil legal aid for the poor. It is one way to meet obligations under the Voluntary Pro Bono Standard.

LAWYERS GIVE TIME



COMMUNITY SERVICE

In addition to giving pro bono legal services to the poor and monetary donations for legal aid, many lawyers also give time to other community efforts.

www.alawyerhelps.org

“A Lawyer Helps” is a State Bar of Michigan program with two goals: to recognize how lawyers make a difference every day to individuals and communities, and to provide tools for lawyers to continue doing so. Shining a light on lawyers who provide free legal help to the poor, donate for nonprofit legal aid programs, and give back to their communities assures well-deserved acknowledgment. But even more important, it provides examples that other lawyers can look to in continuing the public service traditions of the legal profession.

For lawyers, helping starts with pro bono. Pro bono includes free legal assistance to low-income persons

(the one community service that only lawyers can perform) and financial contributions for legal aid programs. These public service priorities are part of written ethical standards adopted by the legal profession; they emphasize that lawyers’ first public service obligations are to help meet the legal needs of the poor. This is fitting in light of the special skills lawyers have and their role in a justice system. In addition to pro bono, many lawyers give time for other public services in their communities, which “A Lawyer Helps” also seeks to recognize and celebrate.

Often, however, lawyers helping their neighbors and the justice system does not make the news. “A Lawyer

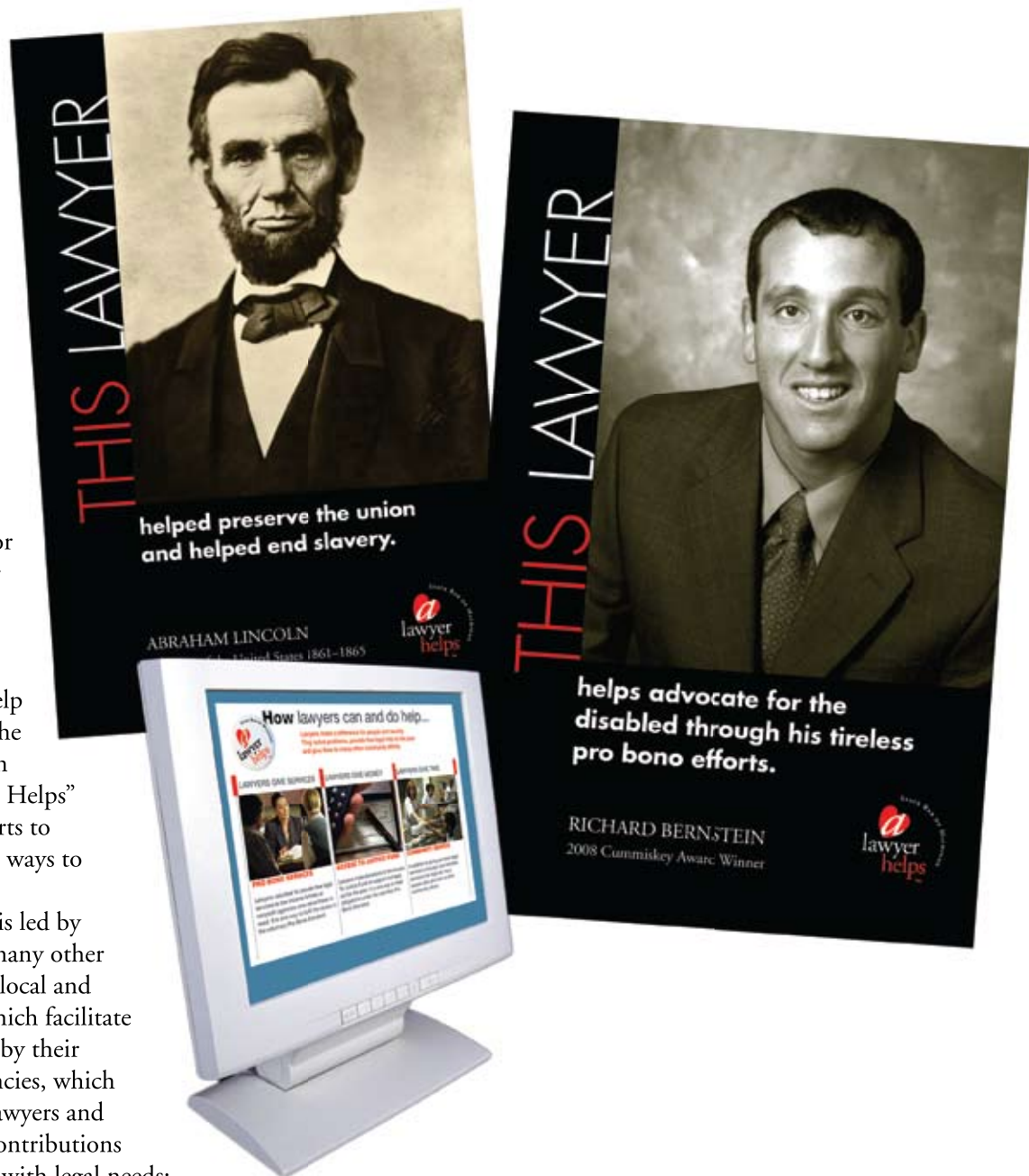
Helps” provides some ways to fill this gap, illustrate that helping really is the heart of the law, and give lawyers tools to continue helping out by giving back. These tools include a dynamic new website at www.alawyerhelps.org. This website is an umbrella portal for lawyers who want to give pro bono legal services to assist those in need, donate to the Access to Justice Fund to support nonprofit legal aid services, and provide more community service beyond pro bono. It contains very helpful “Frequently Asked Questions” as well as an easy web form to upload stories about lawyers who help others.

The “A Lawyer Helps” website is a source of information and also provides resources to facilitate lawyers’ involvement in pro bono and community service. Using the website, lawyers can find out how to get a pro bono case to help a low-income family with a legal problem as well as how to get training, malpractice insurance, and other help with pro bono. Lawyers can also learn how to donate to the Access to Justice Fund for the statewide endowment or for a local legal aid program and find information about charitable tax benefits and how the money is used to help those in need. In addition, the website provides information on how to obtain “A Lawyer Helps” gear such as buttons or t-shirts to wear while volunteering and ways to recognize lawyer volunteers.

While “A Lawyer Helps” is led by the State Bar of Michigan, many other partners are also important: local and specialty bar associations, which facilitate pro bono and other services by their members; civil legal aid agencies, which recruit and train pro bono lawyers and use Access to Justice Fund contributions to help low-income families with legal needs;

the Michigan State Bar Foundation, which holds the Access to Justice Fund; Michigan law schools, which encourage students to volunteer and help others; and Michigan lawyers and law firms whose help makes a difference to individuals and communities. “A Lawyer Helps” is one way we can work together to continue public service in the highest traditions of the legal profession.

PRESIDENT EDWARD H. PAPPAS, State Bar of Michigan





pro bono services

Pro bono publico (“for the public good”) is an important tradition in which the legal profession helps assure access to justice for those in need. MRPC 6.1 frames pro bono as an ethical duty; the comment to the rule states: “Every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional workload, should find time to participate in or otherwise support the provision of legal services to the disadvantaged.”

Recognizing the compelling need for legal assistance to the poor, the State Bar Representative Assembly adopted the Voluntary Pro Bono Standard (see sidebar). The Standard gives lawyers guidance about annual pro bono expectations, including 3 cases or 30 hours of free legal help for low-income persons or a \$300 donation for a nonprofit legal aid program. Financial contributions are part of the Standard as an option for lawyers who may not be able to provide services. Lawyers and law firms often give both funds and services to meet their pro bono obligations.

Q. What is pro bono service and how does it differ from community service?

A. Pro bono service as defined in the State Bar Voluntary Pro Bono Standard contemplates free or reduced-fee legal services for low-income individuals and groups. The key components of the definition are “free” “legal services” to “low income persons or organizations.” “A Lawyer Helps” recognizes that many lawyers provide community service in addition to pro bono legal services; for example, lawyers build houses for Habitat for Humanity, serve food at soup kitchens, and coach youth sports teams.

Q. What are the benefits of pro bono service?

A. Beyond helping with the huge unmet need for legal assistance to the disadvantaged, many lawyers report great personal satisfaction in providing pro bono services to those in need. Also, newer lawyers gain valuable knowledge and experience, and more seasoned lawyers can often pursue advocacy that goes beyond their typical employment arena.

Q. What is the Pro Bono Initiative (PBI) and how does it encourage pro bono?

A. The PBI is a volunteer group under the umbrella of the State Bar Committee on Justice Initiatives, which works to develop and coordinate pro bono programs and services in Michigan as well as to advise the State Bar on policy issues related to pro bono. PBI activities include education on substantive law for pro bono lawyers and supporting statewide efforts to promote pro bono involvement, e.g., the Pro Bono Veteran’s Law Training for volunteer lawyers assisting veterans and their families. The PBI also participates in the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program, which links legal aid providers with large law firms whose pro bono help assists in resolving complex matters. The PBI publishes the “Circle of Excellence” (COE), which recognizes Michigan law firms and corporations for their compliance with the Voluntary Pro Bono Standard. Another acknowledgment offered by the PBI is the John W. Cummiskey Award to honor the outstanding efforts of a pro bono attorney.

Q. What other pro bono resources are available?

A. Local legal aid programs make case referrals and offer training and support to their pro bono panels. Some local and special bar associations also do so. A list of pro bono programs appears in the “Pro Bono Reference Manual” (see www.alawyerhelps.org). The manual also provides information on such things as law firm pro bono policies and practices, step-by-step handling of a pro bono case (including ways to obtain malpractice insurance), frequently asked questions about pro bono, alternatives to extended case representation, special concerns of lawyer groups (such as solo practitioners), judicial involvement in pro bono, and programs eligible for pro bono monetary contributions.

Q. How do I learn more about pro bono services or sign up to volunteer?

A. See www.alawyerhelps.org or call the State Bar of Michigan at (800) 968-4111. Or call your local legal aid program to ask about opportunities to provide legal help to those in need.



a pro bono lawyer helped a mother and child remain in their home. The grandmother had owned the house but had not paid the property taxes before she died. After the house was sold for back taxes, the pro bono lawyer went to court and secured title in the mother's name so she could obtain financing. That allowed her to pay the property taxes and remain in the family home with her child.



Voluntary Standard for Pro Bono Participation¹

As adopted by the Representative Assembly, 4/28/1990

All active members of the State Bar of Michigan should participate in the direct delivery of Pro Bono legal services to the poor by annually:

1. Providing representation without charge to a minimum of three low income individuals; or
2. Providing a minimum of thirty hours of representation or services, without charge, to low income individuals or organizations; or
3. Providing a minimum of thirty hours of professional services at no fee or at a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations; or
4. Contributing a minimum of \$300 to not-for-profit programs organized for the purpose of delivering civil legal services to low income individuals or organizations.

¹ See Voluntary Standard for Pro Bono Participation with complete footnotes at www.alawyerhelps.org.



ATJ Fund donations

The Access to Justice Campaign is a partnership between the State Bar of Michigan, the Michigan State Bar Foundation, and Michigan's civil legal aid programs to increase resources for civil legal aid for the poor. It centralizes fundraising to provide a streamlined way for law firms and attorneys to donate to fulfill their ethical obligation under the Voluntary Pro Bono Standard (see Standard on page 25). Financial contributions are a way for lawyers who are not able to provide free legal services for those in need to support access to justice. Many lawyers and law firms generously give both pro bono services and financial donations.

Tax-deductible contributions are received by the Michigan State Bar Foundation, which administers the Access to Justice (ATJ) Fund. Donors may direct their gift to support the statewide permanent endowment or may designate donations for one or more eligible nonprofit legal aid programs (see ATJ Fund program list at www.atjfund.org).

Q. Why are donations to the ATJ Fund needed?

A. Although civil legal aid agencies receive government and private grants, the need still far outpaces available resources. Also, these funding sources fluctuate. In today's economy, grants are fewer, but the need for services has increased. For example, more families are facing the loss of their homes. With the highest unemployment rate in the nation, Michigan's poverty level has risen to 14 percent, with one in four children afflicted by poverty.

Q. But can pro bono services fill the gap?

A. No. Despite the fact that Michigan lawyers provide many thousands of pro bono hours each year, more help is still needed. Studies have shown that insufficient resources force Michigan's legal aid programs to turn away at least three persons for every four persons served and that no more than 20 percent of the legal needs of the poor are being met.

Q. Why does the ATJ Fund include gifts for local programs?

A. The Access to Justice Campaign supports local programs in their efforts to raise funds to help the legal aid offices increase their resources and lower the cost of fundraising. Of the more than \$9 million raised to date through the ATJ Fund, more than half has been designated by donors for local programs and services. When a donation is designated for local program operations, 100 percent of the gift is paid to the program by the Foundation.

Q. Why is it important to build a statewide ATJ Fund endowment?

A. The ATJ Fund includes a growing permanent statewide endowment to generate ongoing and sustainable income into the future, which will help protect legal aid programs from the costs of service disruption caused by funding fluctuations. An endowment gift also enables law firms and individuals to leave a legacy that supports access to justice for years to come. Through an arrangement with the Capital Region Community Foundation, donors can receive a Michigan tax credit for endowment donations.



Q. Where can I donate or obtain more information?

A. For information about services by Michigan's legal aid programs, see www.msbf.org/JFA2007.pdf.

For information about tax benefits and how to donate to the Access to Justice Fund, see www.atjfund.org.

Each year, Michigan's nonprofit civil legal aid agencies close cases for more than 50,000 individuals and families with critical legal needs. They also help many more low-income people through providing legal educational information or referrals to other community help.

Gifts to the ATJ Fund support legal aid services that often result in keeping families safe, preserving their home and preventing homelessness, maintaining support for children and promoting economic stability, protecting the elderly from unscrupulous contractors, helping disabled persons access medical care, shielding indigent workers from unfair or dangerous practices, and addressing other legal needs that seriously affect vulnerable persons.

What do ATJ Fund donations support?

(Estimates from Michigan State Bar Foundation)

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- \$100** allows a legal aid hotline to provide telephone advice to help a destitute senior citizen navigate the paperwork needed to apply for food assistance or medical benefits.
-
- \$300** permits a legal aid program to help a low-income family prevent an eviction and maintain safe and affordable housing.
-
- \$600** allows a legal aid program to help an indigent domestic violence survivor maintain a contested protection order from the time of abuse through legal representation on the order.
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- \$1,000** permits a legal aid program to help a domestic violence victim and her children avoid moving to a shelter, obtain a protection order to live free of violence, get a divorce, and secure custody and child support.



a legal aid program helped a disabled woman maintain medical and food assistance. After her food aid was cut off, the woman could not meet living expenses and also pay for her prescription medicine. When legal aid showed that policies under the law required factoring in medical costs, the decision was reversed. As a result, the woman received critically needed hunger relief and also could obtain the medicine she needed to survive.



community service

Lawyers not only help assure access to justice for all through pro bono legal work and donations to the Access to Justice Fund as described on pages 24–27, many lawyers also provide other community services. Lawyers help their communities in a variety of ways—sometimes quietly in their neighborhoods and sometimes as leaders in the community. Often, the public may not even be aware that these people are lawyers. For example, no one may know that the literacy volunteer at the local library helping a child learn to read is a corporate lawyer. There may even be some who do not know that President Lincoln was a lawyer or that President Obama is a lawyer. Recognizing lawyer citizen contributions is one of the goals of the “A Lawyer Helps” program, as is providing tools to help lawyers continue to help their neighbors and contribute to their communities.

Q. How does “A Lawyer Helps” define *non pro bono* community service?

A. Community service is volunteer or other public service that falls outside the scope of the services a lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide under the Voluntary Pro Bono Standard (see Standard on page 25). One example is a lawyer serving food at a food bank. Another is serving on a local symphony board. Serving on a local pro bono committee or legal aid program board would qualify as pro bono rather than other community service because it calls on legal skills and advances legal aid for those in need.

Q. How will public education about “A Lawyer Helps” happen?

A. The website at www.alawyerhelps.org is also accessible to the media and the public who want to have more information about how lawyers help others. Information for the media and the public about “A Lawyer Helps” or how lawyers make a difference to individuals and to their communities will primarily be disseminated through press releases to statewide and local legal and general media,

print and electronic articles, public service announcements, posters and other information for schools, special events and meetings. All of these can link to www.alawyerhelps.org for more information.

Q. What are the benefits of participating in “A Lawyer Helps?”

A. Benefits for local or special bar associations or other groups include being part of our public service legacy, ordering “A Lawyer Helps” products to distribute to volunteers free or at cost from the State Bar, obtaining publicity for public service events, being highlighted in “A Lawyer Helps” State Bar website and other publicity generated by the State Bar, receiving marketing assistance from the State Bar for efforts related to “A Lawyer Helps,” and accessing helpful resources via the “A Lawyer Helps” toolkit and State Bar staff. Participants are asked to follow “A Lawyer Helps” participation guidelines.

Q. How can “A Lawyer Helps” participants obtain “A Lawyer Helps” gear?

A. Simply fill out, sign, and submit the “Gear Order Form” (see opposite page) two weeks or more before the gear is needed. The State Bar will make every effort to fill each request, subject to availability of gear and the requirements noted on the request form.

Q. How do I learn more about participating in “A Lawyer Helps?”

A. For more information on participating in “A Lawyer Helps” or to upload stories and order gear, see www.alawyerhelps.org.

“A Lawyer Helps” GEAR Order Form

We are only able to accept group orders at this time. Individuals will soon be able to order gear at www.alawyerhelps.org. Please allow two weeks for delivery.

Gear Up!



All participants in “A Lawyer Helps” are asked to help promote consistent messages about the program by following the guidelines below. Tools and other resources for easy ways to meet these goals and a list of benefits available to participants can be found at www.alawyerhelps.org. Participants are asked to:

- Use the authorized “A Lawyer Helps” logo without varying its design;
- Use the brief “co-branding” language in ads or other pieces that lack text explanation of “A Lawyer Helps” (see www.alawyerhelps.org);
- Use the short “boilerplate” paragraph in articles and other pieces with text to describe “A Lawyer Helps” (see www.alawyerhelps.org);
- Ask lawyer volunteers to wear/use “A Lawyer Helps” gear when volunteering and afterwards to promote the program;
- Submit stories, photos and articles about lawyer volunteers to “A Lawyer Helps” (form available at www.alawyerhelps.org);
- Promote the legal profession’s public service priority of pro bono (services and donations) and “A Lawyer Helps” whenever possible; and
- Use the “A Lawyer Helps” program, language, gear, and logo only for nonprofit, nonpartisan efforts regarding pro bono (services and donations) and other community service.

I/we will help support the “A Lawyer Helps” program by following the guidelines listed above—please send my gear!

Signature _____

Date _____

ITEM	QUANTITY	TOTAL COST
T-SHIRTS	\$8/shirt (minimum order 5 tee shirts)	
	Small	
	Medium	
	Large	
	X-Large	
	XX-Large	
BUTTON	25 buttons/\$12 (minimum order 25 buttons)	
APRON	\$12/apron (minimum order 5 aprons)	
HATS	\$15/hat (minimum order 5 hats)	
Subtotal Taxable Items \$		
6% Sales Tax \$		
Total Taxable Items \$		

Name/Organization _____ P# _____

Street Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Payment is enclosed, check # _____

Please make checks payable to the State Bar of Michigan

Please charge the following credit card:

VISA: _____ Exp. Date _____

MasterCard: _____ Exp. Date _____

Cardholder Name (please print): _____

Complete Billing Address: _____

Signature: _____

Mail this form and payment to:

State Bar of Michigan
 ATTN: Finance Department
 Michael Franck Building
 306 Townsend Street
 Lansing, MI 48933-2012
 (800) 968-1442 FAX: (517) 346-6365