The Committee fought for increased funding for legal services programs, through challenging restrictive Legal Services Corporation regulations and advocating for mandatory participation in the New York IOLA Fund.

### Key Themes

**Creating the Pro Bono Directory**

The Committee identified critical areas in need of increased pro bono participation, including the representation of indigent immigrants, death-sentenced persons, tenants facing eviction proceedings, and people with disabilities suffering the wrongful termination or denial of public benefits.

**Appearing as amici in civil rights cases to support fair attorneys’ fees awards and to challenge the coerced waiver of statutory attorney’s fees**

- *In City of Riverside v. Rivera*, 477 U.S. 561 (1986), a U.S. Supreme Court case challenging an award of attorney fees to the successful civil rights plaintiffs, the Committee’s amicus brief argued that limiting fee awards to an amount strictly proportional to the damages will discourage the private bar even further from entering the civil rights field of legal practice. The Court held that the attorney’s fees to the plaintiff in this “unreasonable physical force” matter were reasonable.

**Urging increased pro bono representation of immigrants**

- In a report highlighting the pressing needs of indigent immigrants, not only in terms of immigration status but also in the areas of housing, employment, and health care, the Committee denounced LSC restrictions on the representation of immigrants by LSC-funded legal services organizations and urged increased collaboration with volunteer lawyer programs to recruit and train pro bono attorneys to represent immigrants.

**Rallying New York pro bono lawyers to represent death sentenced persons**

- In a resolution calling for pro bono representation for death-sentenced persons, the Committee stated “it is intolerable to allow the execution of persons who – unable to afford an attorney for capital conviction proceedings – have not had an opportunity to present their substantial constitutional claims to the federal courts. . . . In light of the need, every law firm in New York should seriously consider representing . . . at least one death sentenced person during post-conviction proceedings.”

**Responding to the critical need for funding of disability benefits and contesting wrongful terminations of benefits**

- The Committee wrote a series of letters to New York political leaders urging a funding level of $5 million for the FY 1987-88 Budget for the State Disability Advocacy Program (DAP). Noting that DAP was established in response to federal policies that caused thousands of New Yorkers to be taken off of federal disability programs, the Committee emphasized the critical importance of DAP’s contracts with legal services organizations to help people with disabilities contest the wrongful termination or denial of federal social security disability and supplemental security income benefits.

**Preventing homelessness through pro bono representation of tenants faced with eviction**

- The Committee emphasized the importance of representing tenants in eviction proceedings as a means of preventing homelessness and alleviating the burdens of homelessness on state and public financial resources.

**Calling for mandatory participation in the IOLA Fund**

- Because only 15% of attorneys eligible to participate in the IOLA program had joined the program, the Committee resolved that the New York IOLA Program should be converted from a voluntary to a mandatory program to enhance its ability to provide important funding for legal services.

**Supporting the court’s authority to appoint counsel for indigent civil litigants**

- The Committee argued in its amicus brief that federal district courts have the authority to appoint counsel to represent indigent parties in appropriate civil cases.

**Asserting a right to counsel in eviction proceedings**

- The Committee supported the Equal Access to Justice Act as a means of providing equal justice by authorizing an award of attorney’s fees and other reasonable expenses incurred by prevailing parties in civil proceedings against the State. “Equal access to justice is promoted by lowering the economic barriers facing low income individuals or small businesses that lack the resources to contest unjustified governmental action.”

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<td>Creating the Pro Bono Directory, a detailed list of legal services and nonprofit organizations offering pro bono opportunities in New York, to encourage and assist lawyers in participating in pro bono.</td>
<td>Protecting legal services organizations from restrictive LSC regulations</td>
<td>The Committee supported proposed state legislation, which was signed into law, creating an &quot;interest on Lawyers Accounts&quot; (IOLA) fund. This law enabled the pooling of funds held by attorneys for clients for periods of time too short, or in amounts too small, to earn interest for the clients, and the interest earned on the pooled amount to be distributed to legal services programs.</td>
<td>Advocating for adequate fees for plaintiffs’ attorneys in civil rights litigation</td>
<td>Appearing as amici in civil rights cases to support fair attorneys’ fees awards and to challenge the coerced waiver of statutory attorney’s fees</td>
<td>Urging increased pro bono representation of immigrants</td>
<td>Responding to the critical need for funding of disability benefits and contesting wrongful terminations of benefits</td>
<td>Preparing homelessness through pro bono representation of tenants faced with eviction</td>
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It is the Committee’s hope that the Pro Bono Directory will prove to be a useful tool, not only to lawyers in the fulfillment of their public service obligations, but to the public as well, by assisting in the delivery of legal services to those who might otherwise lack representation.