

The New York City Bar Association's Pro Bono & Legal Services Committee [2001-2010]

Chairs: James H.R. Windels, William T. Russell, Jr., Madeleine Schachter, and Stacey O'Haire Fahey

NEW YORK CITY BAR

Major Initiatives:

- **Response to 9/11** Assisted in the response by the City Bar and the New York pro bono community in providing legal services to victims of the 9/11 attacks and their families. The Committee membership worked closely with the City Bar leadership and numerous legal services groups in organizing the massive response effort, which involved 3,000 lawyers and provided extensive, multi-layered assistance to over 4000 clients. The committee assisted with training and recruitment efforts, and provided ongoing guidance to the City Bar Justice Center, which coordinated the effort that also incorporated many of the City's legal services organizations, law schools and bar associations.
- **Unbundled Legal Services** Researched and analyzed how to provide unbundled legal services (i.e., services to a client in a discrete subject matter area) consistent with the rules of professional responsibility and the interests of indigent clients and law firm volunteers. Created model engagement letters and guidelines for the provision of unbundled services in various areas of practice.
- **New Associates Pro Bono Day** Organized a New Associates Pro Bono Day each year when approximately 150 new associates starting work at law firms in New York were welcomed at the City Bar and could choose from a variety of training and information sessions offered by legal services groups.
- **Best Practices in Pro Bono Series** The highly acclaimed Best Practices series began in 2010 and has been a feature of the Committee for approximately seven years. Each session convenes a group to discuss an issue impacting pro bono legal services. A broad audience is invited, with attendees from law firms, legal services organizations, law schools, corporate in-house lawyers and others. The sessions are not recorded, in order to encourage a safe space within which the participants can have a candid discussion.
- **Pro Bono Principles** signed by 30 NY firms

Some Yearly Highlights

2004	2005	2008	2009	2009-10	2010-11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commented on the Unified Court System's report, "The Future of Pro Bono in New York." The Committee applauded many of the proposed recommendations but also urged the adoption of the requirement that lawyers in New York report their pro bono hours and contributions to legal services organizations. The Committee noted that the pro bono needs were great and that while the proposed recommendations would be helpful the mandatory reporting requirement is a stronger measure that should spur greater pro bono involvement and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted amicus brief to U.S. Supreme Court in <i>Velazquez v. Legal Services Corporation</i>. The brief, with 17 bar associations from around the country as amici, urged the overruling of the requirement that LSC grantees receiving other than LSC funds administer those funds completely separately from the LSC funds. [Note: according to the Brennan Center website, this case was suspended in 2009 by agreement of both parties] Throughout this decade and continuing today, the Committee supported annual lobbying trips to Washington to urge that adequate funding be provided for the Legal Services Corporation. This effort was coordinated with the New York State Bar Association and the American Bar Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee communicated with Congress to urge the lifting of restrictions imposed by Congress that prevented LSC grantees from undertaking certain activities even with funds raised other than through LSC grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee prepared general pro bono guidelines for those involved in pro bono representations, to better inform both lawyers and clients and to manage expectations. These guidelines were translated into several languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters and testimony provided regarding IOLA and the future of Civil Legal Services in NY. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized Corporate Counsel Roundtable; Provided testimony on behalf of City Bar for Chief Judge Lippman's Task Force to Expand Access to Justice.