



THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

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PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

RONALD D. CASTILLE
CHIEF JUSTICE

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January 7, 2011

Dear Pennsylvania Attorney:

Pennsylvania is dealing with a civil legal aid crisis where half the people who appear at a legal aid office and who qualify for legal aid are denied such help due to lack of resources. Despite special fees and a new school loan forgiveness program for civil legal aid attorneys, our system of justice does not have the sufficient professional resources to meet the growing need for such services in these tough economic times.

Pennsylvania lawyers have a proud tradition of pro bono service, but now is the time for us to do more. Pro bono service by Pennsylvania's lawyers cannot be a replacement for adequate funding of the courts and the legal aid system, but the need for help among the poor to access justice is so significant that the legal community cannot wait for the funding deficiencies to be remedied.

As Chief Justice, I join with Gretchen Mundorff, President of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, in urging every Pennsylvania attorney to take at least one new pro bono matter or to continue to work on an ongoing pro bono matter through a legal aid provider or an organized pro bono program. If you are unable to take a pro bono case, I encourage you to make a donation to support your local or statewide civil legal aid and pro bono programs. Every lawyer can review the resources at www.palawhelp.org, and each attorney can also register on www.paprobono.net to add to the resources on that site.

There are nearly 70,000 attorneys licensed in Pennsylvania. From all accounts, approximately 10% of those attorneys render some form of pro bono service on an annual basis. The resources that would be available to those with the inability to access legal services in our Commonwealth if every lawyer stepped forward are staggering.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald D. Castille".

CHIEF JUSTICE RONALD D. CASTILLE