

## **IDAHO PRO BONO WEEK**

**By: Jim Jones, Chairman  
Idaho Pro Bono Commission**

Idaho's legal community will be celebrating Idaho Pro Bono Week during October 19–25, 2014. The Idaho Pro Bono Commission is urging Idaho lawyers to commit more legal help to those who cannot afford it, while recognizing the many lawyers who have provided cost-free services in the past.

Free legal services to low-income Idahoans are made available through a variety of sources. The Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, operated out of the offices of the Idaho State Bar, accepts requests for legal services, screens the applicants for income eligibility, and makes referrals to lawyers willing to provide free representation. In 2013, more than 750 attorneys, working in association with the program, provided more than 15,000 hours of volunteer attorney assistance to more than 1,600 low-income individuals and families, including legal representation in more than 600 state court cases, while volunteer lawyers provided 635 hours of pro bono service in federal court cases.

Idaho Legal Aid Services is a statewide non-profit law firm dedicated to serving the civil legal needs of low income Idahoans through its seven regional offices. In 2013 its staff attorneys and attorney volunteers provided 17,502.8 hours of free legal services to thousands of Idahoans with legal problems such as domestic violence, wrongful evictions, illegal foreclosure, guardianships for abused or neglected children, Medicaid and Social Security problems of seniors, and unlawful discrimination.

The Idaho Law Foundation is sponsoring a statewide campaign to fund legal services for low-income residents and persons with disabilities, with the funding to be shared among the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, Idaho Legal Aid Services, and Disability Rights Idaho. The fund-raising goal is \$300,000 and, through the support of lawyers and other public-minded citizens, the campaign has reached the halfway mark.

The graduating class of 2014 at the University of Idaho College of Law compiled approximately 9,330 hours of pro bono services, under the supervision of Idaho lawyers and judges, as part of the college's distinctive pro bono program in which every student participates. Students and faculty at Concordia University School of Law contributed 1,003 hours of pro bono service in 2013 and are committed to expanding access to justice through their pro bono service requirement, their on-site legal clinic, and providing pro bono training for Idaho lawyers

In addition, many Idaho lawyers, acting on their own volition, generously provide many untallied hours of pro bono service to citizens of Idaho without asking or receiving any recognition for their unpaid services.

The Idaho Pro Bono Commission was established in 2008 with the charge of encouraging lawyers to provide more pro bono service. Its constituent members consist of Idaho's state

courts, the United States Courts in Idaho, the Idaho State Bar, the Idaho Law Foundation, the University of Idaho College of Law, and Concordia University College of Idaho.

The Commission and its members recognize that our country's dedication to equal justice under the law cannot be realized if people with limited financial resources are not able to have access to the courts. The need for free legal services has substantially increased because of current economic conditions. The Commission and its members are consequently intensifying their efforts to get more attorney participation in pro bono work. Recognition and celebration of Pro Bono Week in Idaho is part of that effort.

## **RESOLUTION DESIGNATING IDAHO PRO BONO WEEK – 2014**

**WHEREAS**, we are a nation dedicated to “liberty and justice for all,” and equal justice and the fair administration of justice are fundamental to our system of government; and

**WHEREAS**, the promise of equal justice under the law is not realized for individuals and families who have no meaningful access to the justice system because they are unable to pay for legal services; and

**WHEREAS**, this de facto denial of equal justice has an adverse impact on these individuals, families, and society as a whole, and works to erode public trust and confidence in our system of justice; and

**WHEREAS**, as a consequence of current economic conditions many individuals and families are experiencing critical civil legal problems they cannot afford to address; and

**WHEREAS**, Idaho’s lawyers and judges strongly support the provision of free-of-charge legal services to those can’t afford them and have joined together in a collaborative effort to support pro bono services through the establishment of the Idaho Pro Bono Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2013, more than 750 public and private attorneys, working in association with the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, provided more than 15,000 hours of volunteer attorney assistance to more than 1,600 low-income individuals and family members, including the provision of legal representation in more than 600 state cases, while in 2013 volunteer lawyers provided 635 hours of pro bono service in federal court cases; and

**WHEREAS**, Idaho Legal Aid Services is a statewide non-profit law firm dedicated to serving the civil legal needs of low income Idahoans through its seven regional offices and in 2013 its staff attorneys and attorney volunteers provided 17,502.8 hours of free legal services to thousands of Idahoans with legal problems such as domestic violence, wrongful evictions, illegal foreclosure, guardianships for abused or neglected children, Medicaid and Social Security problems of seniors, and unlawful discrimination; and

**WHEREAS**, the Idaho Law Foundation is sponsoring a statewide campaign to fund legal services for low-income residents and persons with disabilities, with the funding to be shared among the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, Idaho Legal Aid Services, and Disability Rights Idaho; and

**WHEREAS**, many Idaho lawyers, acting upon their volition, generously provide many untallied hours of pro bono service to the citizens of our State without receiving recognition for their unpaid services; and

**WHEREAS**, the graduating class of 2014 at the University of Idaho College of Law compiled approximately 9,330 hours of pro bono services, under the supervision of lawyers and judges, as part of the College’s distinctive pro bono program in which every student participates; and

**WHEREAS**, students and faculty at Concordia University School of Law contributed 1,003 hours of pro bono service in 2013, and are committed to expanding access to justice through their pro bono service requirement, their on-site legal clinic, and providing pro bono training for Idaho lawyers; and

**WHEREAS**, October 19-25 has been designated as National Pro Bono Week; and

**WHEREAS**, the Idaho Pro Bono Commission, consisting of the state courts of Idaho, the United States Courts for the District and Bankruptcy Courts for the District of Idaho, the Idaho State Bar, the Idaho Law Foundation, and the University of Idaho College of Law, and Concordia University School of Law, recognizes the need to expand the delivery of legal services to economically disadvantaged persons and families;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Idaho Pro Bono Commission and its constituent members recognize Pro Bono Week, October 19-25, 2014, as a time for Idaho, along with the rest of the Nation, to honor the work of those who provide volunteer legal services, to address the need for civil legal assistance on matters of profound urgency, and to remind all attorneys of their responsibility to assist in meeting the legal profession's sacred commitment to equal justice under the law.

DATED this 3rd day of September, 2014, by the IDAHO PRO BONO COMMISSION, and its constituent members: SUPREME COURT OF IDAHO, UNITED STATES DISTRICT AND BANKRUPTCY COURTS FOR THE DISTRICT OF IDAHO, IDAHO STATE BAR, IDAHO LAW FOUNDATION, UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO COLLEGE OF LAW, AND CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW.