

Pro Bono Committee, Business Law Section
Minutes for the June 26, 2014 Meeting

Attendees:	Mark Stein, Chair	Jennifer Morando, Vice Chair
	Jeff Hirsch	Janeia Ingram
	Hon. Laurel Isicoff	Maxine Long
	John MacDonald	Hon. Cathy McEwen
	Mindy Mora	Ruth Reyes

1. The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:40 p.m.
2. **January 22, 2014 Minutes.** The minutes were amended to include that Judge Laurel Isicoff attended the meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved as amended.
3. Committee Chair Mark Stein read the mission statement of the Pro Bono Committee:

The mission of the Pro Bono Committee is to achieve 100% participation in Pro Bono Service by Business Law Section members and attorneys in their firms.

4. **Project Help.**

Judge McEwen discussed Project H.E.L.P. Project H.E.L.P. provides legal services to the homeless. Such services commonly include questions regarding social security and disability benefits, employment law questions, minor criminal issues, etc. In cities that have instituted the Project H.E.L.P. program, law firms are “adopting” a month to provide legal services. Each Tuesday night during the month that the firm adopts, volunteers provide services at the local homeless shelter. The Committee discussed what role the Committee and/or Section should take with the Project. Some Committee members expressed that the Project did not provide business law services and, therefore, it should not be a project that the Committee or Section takes on. Judge McEwen urged that the Committee should branch out from business law services because that is not an area of great need for pro bono services. The Committee agreed that the Project should at least be added to the list of pro bono opportunities on the BLS website, and that further discussion should be tabled to the August 2014 Retreat meeting.

5. **Non-Profit Clinics.**

Jeff Hirsch and Ruth Reyes provided a report on the Fort Lauderdale clinic. The planners partnered with legal aid. Recruitment of attorney volunteers went well. They partnered with the United Way of Broward to recruit non-profits.

Janeia Daniels gave a report on the Tallahassee clinic which was held May 14, 2014. Janeia created a volunteer manual for the clinic. The clinic consisted of eleven non-profit clients and seven attorney volunteers, three of which agreed to represent their non-profit client on an ongoing basis.

The Committee then discussed the clinics generally. The Committee still considers the clinics to be a valuable project that the Committee should continue to support. The Committee discussed adding additional clinics in new cities, such as West Palm Beach and Pensacola. The group also discussed reviewing the clinic materials that have been created for the various clinics, and combining them into a uniform set of materials.

6. **Section Leadership Update.**

Section Steph Nagin, joined by Chair Elect Judge Van Nortwick and Secretary-Treasurer Alan Howard, gave a brief Section report. Chair Elect Judge Van Nortwick encouraged the Committee to consider content for the new BLS website, such as pro bono opportunities, the Best Practices guide, and information concerning the clinics. Judge Van Nortwick also encouraged the Committee to continue pursuing the “tear-offs” project.

7. **Best Practices Guide/Model Policy.**

The Committee discussed amending the Best Practices Guide to include the option of collective discharge of attorneys’ pro bono obligations through collective reporting by a law firm. Judge Isicoff agreed to take on the first draft of the amendment. The group will revisit this amendment at the next meeting. The group also discussed the plan to create a model policy or model policies. The group felt that this will be a big project and that the Committee currently lacks the interest and manpower to move forward at this time. The issue was tabled.

8. **Tear-Off Sheets.**

Mindy Mora is going to look into a budget for this project. The Committee will revisit the tear-off sheets at the next meeting.

9. **Miscellaneous.**

The Committee discussed the possibility of producing videos to be played in the circuit courts to educate pro se litigants on where to find resources. However, no decision was made.

Mike Higer asked the group whether the Committee should be coordinating more with other groups, such as local bars and the Big Bar.

The Committee discussed trying to evaluate what it has accomplished since its inception. The group agreed that the Committee has offered more pro bono services; however, we don’t know whether the Committee has succeeded in involving more BLS members.

The Committee discussed changing the format of the pro bono stories of the month – which have never really taken off – to a monthly spotlight on pro bono opportunities.

10. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:25 p.m.