

# CBA Emeritus Pro Bono Attorney Honor Roll: A Call to Pro Bono Service for All Retired and Non-Practicing Attorneys to Assist with COVID-19 Response

By AMY LIN MEYERSON

To address the legal needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic and seeing the growing need to further narrow the access to justice gap, we have established the new and expanded CBA Emeritus Pro Bono Attorneys program. This program features:

- Discounted CBA membership dues for retired attorneys (visit [ctbar.org/specialmembershipprograms](http://ctbar.org/specialmembershipprograms) to learn more)
- Opportunities to engage in pro bono throughout the state under the supervision of an organized legal aid society, a state or local bar association project, or a court-affiliated pro bono program<sup>1</sup>
- Exempt from MCLE and Client Security Fund requirements<sup>2</sup>
- CBA and CT Judicial Branch provided training and support
- CBA provided temporary professional liability coverage for pro bono work
- Appearance on the CBA Emeritus Pro Bono Attorney Honor Roll



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**F**ollowing a change in Connecticut's Practice Book Rules that permitted lawyers registered as "retired" with the superior court to engage in pro bono work under the supervision of a legal services organization or with a CBA sponsored pro bono project,<sup>3</sup> in 2014, a forward-thinking group, including Krista Hess, Peter Arakas, Diane Whitney, Pat Kaplan, and Past CBA Presidents Norm Janes and Lou Pepe, through the CBA Pro Bono Committee and in collaboration with the Judicial Branch, established the Emeritus Small Claims Volunteer Attorney Program in Hartford.<sup>4</sup> This program gives retired and non-practicing lawyers the opportunity to provide legal advice to self-represented litigants in small claims court. These volunteer attorneys meet one-on-one with clients and give them brief advice about procedural questions, how

to present their claims or defenses, and what they might need by way of documentary or testamentary evidence. The CBA provides the training and professional liability coverage for attorneys volunteering for this program. The Emeritus Small Claims Volunteer Attorney Program operates in Hartford, Middletown, and New Haven.<sup>5</sup>

"Emeritus attorney pro bono programs have at least three policy implications for delivery of direct services. The first impact is that the programs offer additional resources and are one method of supplementing existing legal services in light of growing need and finite resources. The second is that emeritus attorneys are well-equipped to present community legal education programs, which have the potential to help seniors and low- and moderate-income individuals

avoid legal crises. The third is that emeritus attorneys may be more readily used to reach out to provide legal services to homebound residents; residents of hospitals, long-term care facilities, and hospices; clients in rural and urban areas with limited transportation; and others who are unable to come to an office or clinic."<sup>6</sup>

These pro bono opportunities for emeritus attorneys are designed to have very flexible time commitments. For example, the pro bono work available through the Judicial Branch's Volunteer Attorney Programs generally requires only a two- to three-hour time commitment. "Many attorneys retire because they want more control over their time," says Peter Arakas. The CBA Emeritus Pro Bono Attorney program allows retired and non-practicing lawyers to

provide access to justice at times that fit within their schedules.

"Why do I do pro bono work? Because I have the tools to change peoples' lives and because it would be selfish not to do so. But also because if I did not do this work, I would be missing some of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had," says Diane Whitney, chair of the Land Use section at Pullman & Comley. "My practice for the last 30 years or so has been limited to environmental and land use matters. I would never have expected to represent a 'shaken' baby, a young person seeking to be emancipated from her abusive parents, a family from Italy escaping from an abusive husband/father, a parent trying to keep his children in this country and away from what he believed to be an Isis threat in his native country, or a mother trying to re-

cover 15 years of past-due child support. But I have done all that and a lot more, all outside my normal practice areas."

During this time of social distancing, legal aid organizations in Connecticut have instituted temporary direct legal information and advice phone lines. For the Greater Hartford area, call 860-541-5070. Outside of Greater Hartford, call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 or visit [www.ctlawhelp.org](http://www.ctlawhelp.org).

Become a CBA Emeritus Pro Bono Attorney today! For more information, contact our Member Service Center at [info@ctbar.org](mailto:info@ctbar.org). #CBAEmeritus-ProBono ■

#### NOTES

1. See pro bono opportunities at [CTLawHelp.org](http://CTLawHelp.org).
2. P.B. 2020, Sec. 2-27, 2-27A & 2-70.

3. P.B. 2020, Sec. 2-55 (e) states, "[a]n attorney who has retired pursuant to this section may engage in uncompensated services to clients under the supervision of an organized legal aid society, a state or local bar association project, or a court-affiliated pro bono program."
4. "Retired Attorneys: Bridging the Pro Bono Gap" by Krista Hess and Peter Arakas, CT Lawyer, Summer 2017, p. 28.
5. [https://jud.ct.gov/volunteer\\_atty\\_prgm.htm](https://jud.ct.gov/volunteer_atty_prgm.htm)
6. Holly Robinson, No Longer on Their Own: Using Emeritus Attorney Pro Bono Programs to Meet Unmet Civil Legal Needs, [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/probono\\_public\\_service/ts/V2\\_pro\\_bono\\_emeritus\\_brochure\\_3\\_5.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/probono_public_service/ts/V2_pro_bono_emeritus_brochure_3_5.pdf)



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