



Judicial Council of California
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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RONALD M. GEORGE
Chief Justice of California
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Dear Bar Leader,

Today, 1.5 million families in California do not have access to lawyers when confronted with legal disputes. This condition exacerbates the anguish of victims of domestic violence, elderly persons swindled out of their retirement nest eggs, and immigrants cheated of their rights. As a community, we need to mobilize the resources of the legal community to ensure access to justice for all.

How can we respond?

For its part, the California justice system has initiated innovations to improve the public's access to our courts and to legal services. We have worked to develop self-help centers, shift funding for trial courts from counties to the state, and we have worked together to establish the Equal Access Fund, which provides \$10 million annually to fund services for indigent people through nonprofit legal services providers.

Unfortunately, the present economic slump may jeopardize our ability to secure our gains and to increase funding. **We must act to increase the number of pro bono attorneys assisting indigent clients.**

Many lawyers across the state and the nation have already heeded the call for pro bono services. Still, we need a larger pool of volunteer lawyers. This need is especially acute in California because of our growing diverse population of immigrants, low-wage workers, seniors, and other vulnerable groups who face enormous difficulties in accessing the justice system.

Enclosed is a letter from the California State Bar's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services (SCDLS) seeking your organization's support for pro bono services among your members, along with a tool kit containing some information useful for your campaign. I urge you to work actively with your members to increase pro bono in your community.

Sincerely,

RONALD M. GEORGE
Chief Justice of California and
Chair of the Judicial Council