



Dear Editor:

The American people embrace these words as one of our nation's guiding principles: "And Justice for All." Sadly, the truth is that 19 percent of Alabamians (more than 900,000 people) live in poverty and that number continues to rise. In addition, many of our returning veterans do not have the resources to address pressing legal issues. Living in poverty means that paying for basic necessities of life such as food and shelter are not possible, let alone realizing the ideal of equal access to justice. Many of the same people who live below the poverty level also have critical legal problems ranging from foreclosure and eviction to loss of parental rights, domestic violence and other fundamental needs that require legal help.

Alabama lawyers have a long standing tradition of helping those in need of legal services. More than 3,500 lawyers participate in one of Alabama's volunteer lawyers programs and render service by providing pro bono legal services. Often, the only thing standing between homelessness, violence and abuse of the disadvantaged among us are members of the various volunteer lawyer programs throughout the state. More help is needed, though.

To educate everyone about lawyers who render service to their communities, and to recruit more attorneys to meet these needs, the month of October has been designated as Pro Bono Month. During that time, we would like you to join us in recognizing the selfless individuals who have been providing free legal assistance to all those who need help, and to increase our efforts as a community to make equal justice for all a reality. You can learn if there are free walk-in legal clinics scheduled in your area by checking www.alabar.org/events/category/pro-bono-month.

Sincerely,