

PRO BONO MONTH PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, records show that one in every four of the more than 900,000 Alabamians living in poverty experience legal problems with the majority of these problems being civil problems, consumer issues (such as creditor harassment and utility non-payment), bankruptcy issues, health issues (such as Medicaid, government insurance and nursing home issues), family law issues (such as divorce, child support/custody and abuse), employment issues (such as unemployment benefits, pension and lost jobs) and housing issues (such as unsatisfactory repairs, foreclosure, eviction and poor living conditions); and

WHEREAS, each year, the low-income citizens of Alabama lack access to legal assistance for their legal problems which are often critical to their safety and independence, forcing them to resolve complex legal problems on their own; and

WHEREAS, the need for civil legal aid in Alabama is dire, because unlike in the criminal defense system, funding for low-income Alabamians who need civil legal assistance has not yet been met, with the consequences being a lack of access to justice which is devastating for the poor and which weakens our democratic society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, there are fewer than 60 paid legal aid lawyers to serve the more than 800,000 low-income citizens in the state of Alabama; and

WHEREAS, although more than 3,600 members of Alabama's legal community donated more than 12,000 hours in free legal services last year and made generous financial contributions to legal aid organizations in our state, a huge unmet need for civil legal assistance remains for disadvantaged Alabamians; and

WHEREAS, sponsored by the Alabama State Bar and its Pro Bono Task Force, with support from local bar associations statewide, Pro Bono Month 2016 will educate the public about the extensive work Alabama lawyers are doing by donating their time to improve the lives of vulnerable members of our community, and will encourage more individuals in the legal community to get involved in pro bono work and financially support the legal aid system; and

WHEREAS, Pro Bono Month 2016 will feature legal aid clinics throughout Alabama, assisting Alabamians who greatly need legal assistance, but cannot afford to pay for that help, and will also feature service projects throughout the state of Alabama helping lawyers and law students make volunteer connections with legal aid organizations serving Alabamians:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, _____, do hereby proclaim October 2016 as

Pro Bono Month

in (city/county/state), and urge citizens to recognize the contributions of our legal community helping those most in need.