



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Contact:
David Bookstaver
Communications Director
Arlene Hackel, Deputy Director
(212) 428-2500**

**Hon. A. Gail Prudenti
Chief Administrative Judge**

www.nycourts.gov/press

Date: July 17, 2013

Chief Judge Names Committee to Facilitate Pro Bono Efforts of In-House Counsel in NY

NEW YORK – Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman today announced the formation of a statewide committee to examine the potential impact that in-house counsel in New York can make in narrowing the state’s access to justice gap.

Chaired by New York Court of Appeals Judge Victoria A. Graffeo, the Advisory Committee on Pro Bono Service by In-House Counsel will spearhead an initiative to encourage all in-house lawyers who are not admitted to practice law in New York to comply with the state’s mandatory registration rule—a first step before any pro bono service can be undertaken. As defined by the registration rule, an in-house counsel is an attorney who is employed full time in New York by a non-governmental corporation, partnership, association or other legal entity that is not engaged in the practice of law or the rendering of legal services outside such entity. The advisory committee will also examine ways in which registered in-house counsel can participate in the provision of voluntary pro bono legal services on behalf of New York’s poor.

Under Part 522 of the Rules of the Court of Appeals, an attorney admitted to practice and in good standing in another state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia may

provide legal services exclusively to an employer, provided that the attorney is properly registered with the courts. Once registered with the Appellate Division, participating attorneys are subject to the New York Rules of Professional Conduct and attorney disciplinary oversight. However, under current rules, registered in-house counsel may not provide pro bono services, including appearances before tribunals.

Following recommendations issued late last year by the Chief Judge's Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Services in New York, the advisory committee will consider possible revisions to the current practice rules to afford registered in-house counsel the opportunity to participate in pro bono work subject to the ethical rules and disciplinary oversight applicable to lawyers licensed to practice in New York.

As part of this process, the advisory committee will review proposals for reform issued by the New York State Bar Association and the Conference of Chief Judges, survey rules adopted by other states allowing registered in-house counsel to engage in pro bono services and consult with the Pro Bono Institute, which works to support and enhance the pro bono efforts of major law firms, in-house corporate legal departments and public interest organizations in the U.S. and around the globe. Additionally, the committee will confer with legal services providers and corporate legal departments to identify suitable pro bono projects for attorneys employed as in-house counsel in New York.

There are approximately 9,000 in-house counsel working in New York, some of whom are admitted to practice law in New York. Furthermore, many are employed by legal departments where providing pro bono legal assistance to the underserved is a core value.

“Regrettably, the civil legal services needs of our most vulnerable New Yorkers continue to outpace the availability of resources. The Advisory Committee on Pro Bono Service by In-House Counsel will explore rule changes and other strategies that most appropriately and effectively leverage the expertise of the talented cadre of in-house counsel in our aim to broaden the state's pro bono efforts. I am delighted that my esteemed colleague, Hon. Victoria Graffeo, has so generously taken on a leadership role in this critical endeavor, and look forward to working with her and the distinguished members of the committee as we strive to make the promise of equal justice under the law a reality,” said Judge Lippman.

“I am honored to be called upon by Chief Judge Lippman to oversee this innovative undertaking that seeks to bridge the state's justice gap by looking to a previously untapped

resource—lawyers serving as in-house counsel in New York. These attorneys bring an impressive array of legal skills and experience, as well as a strong commitment to pro bono service that can be utilized to benefit New York’s underserved communities. The advisory committee is eager to move ahead to promote the registration of in-house counsel in accordance with New York’s rule and develop a viable proposal to enable registered in-house counsel to engage in pro bono legal services,” said Judge Graffeo.

The committee is expected to submit its recommendations to the Chief Judge and the Administrative Board of the Courts—the court system’s policy-making body—in fall 2013.

A membership roster of the Advisory Committee on Pro Bono Service by In-House Counsel follows.

Advisory Committee on Pro Bono Service by In-House Counsel

Chair

Victoria Graffeo
Senior Associate Judge, New York Court of Appeals

Members

Zachary Abella, CBS Legal Department
Gloria Arthur, Director, Pro Bono Affairs, New York State Bar Association
Helaine Barnett, Chair, Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Services in New York and President, Legal Services Corporate (2004 – 2009)
Cynthia Beagles, Counsel, American Kennel Club
Charles S. Biener, Senior Counsel, PepsiCo, Inc.
David Brill, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, American Stock Transfer & Trust Company LLC
Richard Hobish, Executive Director, Pro Bono Partnership
Esther Lardent, President and CEO, Pro Bono Institute
David Mowry, Senior Counsel, Xerox Corporation
Bret Parker, Executive Director, New York City Bar Association
Ellen Rosenthal, Chief Counsel, Pfizer Legal Alliance, Vice President and Assistant General Counsel, Pfizer Inc.
Eve Runyon, Director, Corporate Pro Bono, Pro Bono Institute
Amar Sarwal, Vice President and Chief Legal Strategist, Association of Corporate Counsel

#