



PRO BONO: The Trifecta of Professional Growth and Development

BY TRAVIS N. BARRICK, ESQ.

Because it is such a privilege to be a licensed attorney, we are all expected to contribute pro bono legal services to the larger community, specifically to those of lesser or no means to obtain services on their own.¹ Pro bono services are but one facet of the larger issue of access to justice. Anyone passionate about access to justice will provide pro bono services and encourage their professional colleagues to do likewise, expanding the pool of attorneys contributing to the public good.

Providing pro bono legal services benefits at least three stakeholders; the clients, the court, and the attorney.

The Client

Pro bono clients have been pre-qualified and pre-screened by legal aid organizations such as the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada and Nevada Legal Services. These clients have legitimate needs for legal advice and representation. An adept attorney can help the client understand and navigate the legal process, as well as provide an analysis and advice as to their rights, remedies, and responsibilities. This work not only helps the individual client in a specific situation, but it also extends a greater trust and respect of the legal profession among the client's own community of family and friends.

The Court

Almost universally, judges and court staff are highly appreciative of attorneys who take pro bono cases. The court is greatly relieved of the burden of explaining the legal process to the client and managing the interactions between the parties. The courts often express that gratitude

by looking favorably on motions regarding discovery, depositions, and scheduling issues.

The Attorney

For attorneys who take pro bono cases that are well within their expertise, the value of the pro bono services vastly outweighs the "cost" to the attorney, which means there can be great personal satisfaction for modest effort. For other attorneys, taking a pro bono case that is in a new area of law is a wonderful way to expand their knowledge and experience, as well as to expose an attorney to other courts and other counsel that are not in their ordinary areas of practice. In short, it is also a great networking opportunity.

I don't mean to brag, but I have handled a lot of pro bono cases, and there is no amount of money that you could offer me to give back the experience and confidence that I have obtained. It is quite literally beyond measure.

That said, it is in almost everybody's best interest to get involved in the various pro bono programs. They provide forms, guidance, and mentoring, as well as covering the attorney under their own malpractice insurance for work on pro bono cases.

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ENDNOTE:

1. Nevada Rules of Professional Responsibility, Rule 6.1(a) - Every lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay. A lawyer should aspire to render at least 20 hours of pro bono publico legal services per year.



TRAVIS BARRICK graduated from the University of San Francisco School of Law in 2002 at age 48. He focuses primarily on representing veterans in their disability claims before the Veterans Administration. In addition, along with his paralegal, Philip Lyons, and numerous externs from the William S. Boyd School of Law, he litigates prisoner's civil rights claims in federal court, through the Pro Bono Program and on a fees basis.

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