



State of New Mexico

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Governor Bill Richardson & New Mexico Supreme Court Declare Pro Bono Week October 25-31

Santa Fe, New Mexico –Governor Bill Richardson and The New Mexico Supreme Court have proclaimed October 25th through the 31st as “New Mexico Pro Bono Week.” Pro bono refers to legal work provided by lawyers at no fee for the public good, most often to low income individuals, in civil law areas such as family law, housing, employment and consumer issues.

“Access to justice is a fundamental and essential right in a democratic society,” said Chief Justice Edward L. Chávez. “With over 25% of New Mexicans qualifying for legal aid services and the poverty rate on the rise during this recession, pro bono services are critical to providing low income individuals the representation they require to gain access to justice and protect their rights and liberties. Over half of New Mexico attorneys reported donating a total of nearly 250,000 pro bono hours in 2008. We applaud those lawyers who, by donating their time, have made a real difference in the lives of many New Mexicans. I encourage each lawyer in New Mexico to participate year round in pro bono assistance. Our republic cannot be a complete democracy if its poorest citizens are effectively denied access to its system of justice.”

“New Mexicans have a proud tradition of service to their communities and our attorneys are an integral part of that tradition,” Governor Richardson said. “Our attorneys, through their pro bono work, are supplying critical assistance to our state’s most vulnerable citizens. I want to thank them for this work and I encourage all New Mexicans to use Pro Bono Week as an opportunity to reflect on how they can give back to their communities.”

The New Mexico Supreme Court, the Access to Justice Commission (ATJ) and Local Pro Bono Committees have planned events in celebration of New Mexico Pro Bono Week. Sixteen Local Pro Bono Committees representing thirteen judicial districts have planned events across the state with one or more Supreme Court Justices or Court of Appeals judges attending an event in each location. Many community events will provide free legal assistance to New Mexico’s low

income population. Continuing legal education sessions for attorneys will also be presented throughout the state.

Both Governor Richardson's and the Supreme Court's Proclamations are attached.

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