



## Supreme Court of Illinois

October 28, 2020

### **SUPREME COURT ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF VOLUNTEER *PRO BONO* PROGRAM TO REDUCE CRIMINAL APPEALS BACKLOG**

The Illinois Supreme Court announced this week the expansion of the Volunteer Pro Bono Program for Criminal Appeals (Program) to include the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Appellate Districts beginning on December 1, 2020.

On February 11, 2020, the Illinois Supreme Court announced the launch of the Pro Bono Program in the Illinois Appellate Court's First and Second Districts as a six-month pilot program utilizing volunteer *pro bono* attorneys to reduce the backlog of criminal appeals currently pending with the Office of the State Appellate Defender (OSAD). In the program, *pro bono* attorneys assist with reducing the backlog by substituting for OSAD in certain criminal appeals.

"The pilot program has worked in reducing the backlog of criminal appeals cases," Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Anne M. Burke said. "I would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work in getting the pilot program up and running and now organizing for a successful rollout for the rest of the state."

During the pilot phase, 75 attorneys were approved to participate in the program and 42 cases were assigned. A total of 18 appellant briefs were submitted by the *pro bono* attorneys, all of which are still pending before the Appellate Court.

"In addition to the commitment and efforts of the volunteer pro bono attorneys, another significant development that should be noted is the level of collaboration that has been achieved between the independent agencies that interact with our criminal justice system. By bringing all of these agencies together, under the leadership of the Supreme Court, collaborative solutions were instituted that played a vital role in successfully moving the pro bono program forward," said Second District Appellate Court Justice Donald C. Hudson, Chair of the Appellate Court Administrative Committee. "The result is a more expeditious resolution of criminal appeals which is crucial to a fair and efficient criminal justice system. On behalf of the Appellate Court Administrative Committee, I also wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Supreme Court for this important and progressive initiative which has served to enhance the quality of justice in our state."

Interested attorneys are asked to fill out the "Volunteer *Pro Bono* Program Attorney Application" available [here](#). The applicant will be asked to provide information necessary for participation, including appellate experience, willingness to work under the supervision of counsel approved as a

volunteer attorney in the program, prior experience clerking for a Supreme Court or Appellate Court Justice, or working in the appellate division of a state or federal agency. Other criteria for approval as a volunteer *pro bono* attorney include up-to-date malpractice insurance, no ARDC disciplines and five years' experience as a licensed attorney with no ARDC disciplines.

“I am overwhelmed by the level of commitment shown by legal counsel in the First and Second Districts to the Supreme Court’s call for Pro Bono counsel to help eradicate the backlog of appeals pending in our Appellate Courts. Pro Bono attorneys have stepped up to the plate and sacrificed their time and used their considerable talents to achieve access to justice for those whose cases remain pending,” said First District Appellate Justice Bertina E. Lampkin, a member of the Appellate Court Administrative Committee. “I am excited to continue to be a part of the expansion of the Criminal Appeals Pro Bono Program statewide. With the addition of Pro Bono attorneys from the Third, Fourth and Fifth Districts, I am confident that, in the near future, we will achieve timely, effective, and expeditious resolution of cases. Access To Justice will be a reality!”

Attorneys who do not meet eligibility requirements can still participate under supervision of an eligible attorney or can qualify by completing a five-week training course offered by OSAD, “Criminal Appeals in Illinois: An Introduction to Law and Procedure.” The training is offered on a quarterly basis and MCLE credit is provided to attorneys who complete the curriculum. The next training seminar is scheduled from **January 4, 2021 through February 5, 2021**. More details about the training curriculum and how to register are available on the Court’s [website](#).

OSAD also has other training materials available to assist volunteer attorneys, including: Criminal Law Handbook and Monthly Digests, Handbook on Briefs and Oral Argument, and Illinois Supreme Court Pending Issues.

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