

News Release

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<http://www.probonoinst.org>

170 Percent Increase in Law Firm Pro Bono over Past Twelve Years

The Pro Bono Institute's [Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM](#) is a unique global aspirational pro bono standard, developed by law firm leaders and corporate general counsel and articulating a single, unitary benchmark for the world's largest law firms. Major law firms that become [Signatories](#) to the ChallengeSM acknowledge their institutional, firm-wide commitment to provide pro bono legal services to low income and disadvantaged individuals and families and nonprofit groups. The ChallengeSM definition of pro bono has become an industry standard, utilized not only by major law firms, but by the legal media in reporting the pro bono contributions of large firms. Each year, the Pro Bono Institute analyzes the pro bono statistics reported by the Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM Signatories and produces a report detailing the aggregate amount of pro bono legal services provided by these firms.

The Executive Summary, detailing the results of the 2007 Pro Bono Institute Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM, has just been released, and it provides an impressive picture of the state of law firm pro bono. In 1995, the Pro Bono Institute announced that 135 of the nation's largest law firms had provided almost 1,600,000 hours of pro bono legal services. Twelve years later, 135 of the nation's largest law firms provided 4,285,684 hours of pro bono legal services – an increase of 170 percent!

As important as the number of hours provided by Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM Signatories is the number of lawyers providing that pro bono service.

In 1995, 7,270 partners and 10,504 associates (a total of 17,774) participated in the provision of pro bono legal services. In 2007, 17,514 partners and 29,638 associates (a total of 46,798) participated – a substantial 163% increase in participation. The growth in headcount at the participating firms may account in part for the change in participation, but that factor does not wholly account for this substantial expansion.

Furthermore, the amount of pro bono service intended to directly benefit persons of limited means is increasing rapidly as well. Between 1995 and 2007, the number of hours of pro bono service provided to persons of limited means increased 161%, from 1,052,806 to 2,756,330.

Building on the success and impact of the [Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM](#), the Institute, through the [Corporate Pro Bono Project](#), a joint initiative with the Association of Corporate Counsel, launched a [Corporate Pro Bono ChallengeSM](#) in 2006. For more information about the Corporate ChallengeSM or the Corporate Pro Bono Project, please visit the website at www.cpbo.org.

The definition of pro bono contained in the Pro Bono Institute's [Law Firm Pro Bono ChallengeSM](#) is now used by American Lawyer Media in its [pro bono](#) and A-list rankings. By assuring that major law firms have one uniform definition of pro bono, reporting of pro bono statistics has become easier and rankings of pro bono programs have become more standardized.

About the Pro Bono Institute

Established in 1996, PBI is a nonprofit organization mandated to explore and identify new approaches to the poor and disadvantaged unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems. In doing so, the Institute identifies and develops innovative programs and undertakes rigorous evaluations to ensure that these new approaches are workable and effective. The Institute administers a number of projects designed to enhance access to justice, including: the Law Firm Pro Bono Project; Corporate Pro Bono; the Second ActsSM Project; Global Pro Bono; and the Public Interest Pro Bono Project.

About the Law Firm Pro Bono Project

Established in 1989, the Law Firm Pro Bono Project provides a wide range of services to its target audience of larger law firms, including its annual training program, the Pro Bono Seminar, regional mini-seminars, empirical research, surveys, and technical assistance to individual law firms and to consortia of firms on a city-wide, state, regional and national basis. The Project also produces a substantial number of publications, including monographs, best practices compilations, and a comprehensive global clearinghouse of materials and information on all aspects of law firm pro bono practice. The Project, a valued and respected resource among larger law firms, enables these firms, despite dramatic shifts in firm structures and economics, to strengthen, institutionalize, and expand their pro bono culture and service. For more information on the Law Firm Project, please contact Tammy Taylor at ttaylor@probonoinst.org.