

Pro Bono Institute Initiates Nationwide Effort to Launch Innovative Pro Bono Models for Transitioning and Retired Lawyers

For Immediate Release – March 11, 2008
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The Second Acts ProjectSM was launched by the Pro Bono Institute in 2005 to create institutional support for lawyers transitioning to retirement who are interested in a second, volunteer career in public interest law. This month, the Pro Bono Institute (“Institute”) has launched an important, new stage of its Second Acts ProjectSM and will provide a total of \$480,000 in funding over the next three years for organizations who design effective pro bono projects that creatively leverage the historic number of lawyers who are retired or transitioning to retirement.

Due to the aging of the “baby boomer” generation, the number of lawyers in the United States aged 50 and older is expected to triple over the next two decades. This age cohort will be the largest, healthiest, and wealthiest generation of lawyers to approach senior status and will undoubtedly reinvent and reshape the nature of transition and retirement. It has been estimated that if only five percent of these lawyers transition to public interest practice, the number of lawyers available to meet the legal needs of low-income and underserved communities will double.

Now, with the support of a generous grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Institute will administer a competitive grant process to distribute \$160,000 annually to public interest and legal aid organizations who develop and test high-quality pro bono models that use transitioning or retired lawyers, particularly those from major firms, to address the complex needs of low-income, underserved communities and the organizations that serve them. In addition to funding, the Institute will provide organizations with expert technical assistance to ensure these “live lab” pro bono models are replicable on a large scale and well-publicized in the legal community and nationally.

As part of the Second Acts ProjectSM, the Institute will also assist large law firms and corporate legal departments in providing institutional support for these pro bono models in a manner that facilitates the individual lawyer's options and provides business benefits for the firm or legal department. Most recently, the Institute partnered with Professors Kenneth G. Dau-Schmidt, of the Indiana University School of Law, and Marc Galanter, of the University of Wisconsin Law School, to survey major law firms and to assess the incentives and obstacles to second careers in pro bono. The results of this survey have been published recently and are available upon request, subject to the requirements of publication.

About the Pro Bono Institute at Georgetown University Law Center.

Established in 1996, the Institute is a non-profit 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; the Corporate Pro Bono Project; Second Acts; Global Pro Bono; and the Reinventing Pro Bono Project for public interest organizations. To obtain additional information regarding the Institute, its projects, or its publications, please visit <http://www.probonoinst.org>.

About Second ActsSM

Launched by the Institute in 2004-2005, the Second Acts ProjectSM (i.e., second acts in the lives of America's lawyers) is an initiative designed to enhance access to justice for low income and disadvantaged persons and groups by creating institutional support for seasoned attorneys who wish to pursue a second, volunteer career as a public interest lawyer. Through Second ActsSM, the Institute will work with its core constituencies – major law firms, corporate in-house legal departments, and public interest organizations – to develop, test, evaluate, and replicate a range of effective models that facilitate lawyers' transition from commercial practice to public service and pro bono practice. To obtain additional information about the Second Acts ProjectSM and funding available through the Institute, please visit <http://www.probonoinst.org/secondacts.php>.