

Cite as 2023 Ark. 136

SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

IN RE ARKANSAS ACCESS TO
JUSTICE MONTH AND THE
ARKANSAS PRO BONO APPEALS
PILOT PROGRAM

Opinion Delivered: October 5, 2023

PER CURIAM

As officers of the court, Arkansas attorneys bear a professional responsibility, under Rule 6.1 of the Arkansas Rules of Professional Conduct, to provide free legal services to persons of limited means or organizations that serve persons of limited means and to voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means. This commitment to public service represents one of the noblest attributes of the legal profession.

We join the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission in designating October as Access to Justice Month to recognize the valuable contributions made by legal aid and pro bono attorneys throughout the year and to encourage pro bono participation to address the legal needs of low-income Arkansans.

The Court commends the many Arkansas attorneys who serve their profession, their communities, and their state by donating thousands of hours of pro bono services. The Court encourages all attorneys to abide by both the letter and the spirit of Rule 6.1 through pro bono service and financial support. Consistent with Rule 3.7(B) of the Arkansas Code

of Judicial Conduct, the Court also encourages all judges to advocate for pro bono service by attorneys, to participate in events that honor attorneys who provide pro bono service, to write and speak in favor of pro bono service, and to recruit attorneys to provide pro bono service.

As part of the Court's effort to encourage pro bono service, we announced last spring the creation of the Arkansas Pro Bono Appeals Pilot Program for the purpose of providing low-income appellate litigants with pro bono advice and counsel. *In re Creation of the Arkansas Pro Bono Appeals Pilot Program*, 2023 Ark. 110 (per curiam). At that time, we sought volunteer attorneys and noted that we anticipated announcing additional information about the program once it became operational. Today, the court is pleased to announce that the program is operational. Litigants seeking pro bono appellate assistance can start the application process by contacting the Center for Arkansas Legal Services (CALS) and Legal Aid (Legal Aid) of Arkansas at 1-800-952-9243. Upon receipt of a referral from CALS or Legal Aid, we ask volunteer attorneys to, at a minimum, consult with the prospective client about the appeal. The extent of any further assistance or representation pursuant to a referral is a matter between the attorney and the prospective client.

Attorneys who wish to participate or who have questions about the program should email the Arkansas Supreme Court Clerk at probonoappeals@arcourts.gov. We again thank everyone willing to assist in this effort to extend access to appellate justice to our fellow Arkansans who are without the resources to hire appellate counsel.