



HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP
SUITE 4100
600 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30308-2216

TEL 404 • 888 • 4000
FAX 404 • 888 • 4190

RITA A. SHEFFEY
DIRECT DIAL: (404) 888-4053
EMAIL: rsheffey@hunton.com

FILE NO: 99997.029099[30345476]

April 29, 2010

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: probono@gabar.org

Pro Bono Project
State Bar of Georgia
104 Marietta Street, Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30303

Nominee for 2010 William B. Spann, Jr. Award: Atlanta Bar Association

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am very pleased to nominate the **Atlanta Bar Association** for the 2010 William B. Spann, Jr. Award.

Throughout its history, and even more so in recent years, the Atlanta Bar has developed many individual pro bono programs that separately and collectively have satisfied previously unmet needs and extended services to underserved segments of the population. These programs have been and are effective in addressing the civil legal needs of the community, have a high level of participation and commitment of Atlanta Bar members, and have demonstrated community support and participation.

Three times, the Atlanta Bar has been honored for its leadership in pro bono by the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, with the prestigious Harrison Tweed Award, the criteria for which are similar to the criteria for the Spann Award:

- **Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation (AVLF):** The Atlanta Bar Association was recognized in 1981 for the role of its Atlanta Council of Younger Lawyers (ACYL) which, in conjunction with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society (ALAS) and the Gate City Bar Association, created AVLF. AVLF's mission is to match volunteer lawyers with indigent individuals with a connection to Fulton County, Georgia, with civil legal needs which could not be met by Atlanta Legal Aid, because of funding and/or staffing restrictions. After more than 30 years, AVLF is a vibrant independent entity which has become one of the premier pro bono providers in Georgia. The Atlanta Bar,

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through its Sections, provides volunteer lawyers for a variety of matters referred by AVLF. The Atlanta Bar Foundation and the Atlanta Bar Lawyer Referral & Information Service, in addition to Atlanta Bar Sections, support AVLF financially as well. For example, during the past year alone, nine Atlanta Bar Sections contributed a total of \$14,000 to AVLF. As discussed in more detail below, also in 2009, AVLF received \$20,000 from the Atlanta Bar Foundation and \$50,000 from the LRIS.

- **Volunteer Lawyer Program for Cuban Detainees:** In 1987, the Atlanta Bar Association was recognized for its leadership and support in developing and implementing the Volunteer Lawyer Program for Cuban Detainees and for the effective response to the legal needs of Cubans incarcerated in the Atlanta Penitentiary. Atlanta lawyers, working with staff lawyers at Atlanta Legal Aid Society, quickly responded to a crisis, providing legal representation to persons who otherwise did not have access to lawyers. The Atlanta Bar also was honored with the 1987 William B. Spann, Jr. Award for this work.
- **Truancy Intervention Project Georgia (TIP):** In 2002, the Atlanta Bar Association was recognized for its role, through then-president Terry Walsh, along with then Fulton County Juvenile Court Chief Judge Glenda Hatchett, in creating TIP to provide early positive intervention with children reported as truants to get them back in school. TIP, an independent entity, has flourished and received recognition nationwide. TIP is now expanding outside of Georgia to get more kids back in school so they can get a good education. Many Atlanta Bar members volunteer with TIP which is also supported financially by many Atlanta lawyers and firms. The Atlanta Bar, among other things, helps recruit new volunteers for TIP.

Increasingly, the Atlanta Bar has been a leader in encouraging metro Atlanta lawyers to provide pro bono legal services to persons and charitable organizations who otherwise could not afford those services. Particularly during the past two years, the Atlanta Bar has stepped up its leadership in a variety of ways which are summarized below.

Georgia Asylum & Immigration Network (GAIN) (formerly the Atlanta Bar Asylum Project): In 2005, the leadership of the Atlanta Bar, in conjunction with Catholic Charities and a number of law firm associates, created the Atlanta Bar Asylum Project, now known as the Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network (GAIN), to provide free



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representation to immigrants seeking political asylum or other similar legal status. This program has significantly expanded the number of lawyers trained and available to represent the increasing number of people with such needs. While leaders of the Atlanta Bar were instrumental in creating this important new program, they also were mindful that maintaining such a program on an ongoing basis was not within the mission of the organized bar and would be better done by others. As with AVLFF and TIP, GAIN is now an independent entity, with its own Executive Director. Volunteers and financial support are provided by many Atlanta Bar members and their firms.

Pro Bono March Madness¹ CLE Programs: Historically, pro bono and legal services organizations have provided training for volunteers to handle specific types of matters. Some of these training programs included CLE credit, but others did not, often because of the administrative hassles and cost to obtain and provide the credit. In addition, trainings generally offered by such organizations typically are not scheduled on a regular basis, but rather when a new group of volunteers is needed or a law firm or other group of individuals requests it.

Providing a wide variety of CLE programs to members, however, is a key service provided by the Atlanta Bar. In 2006, the Atlanta Bar's Continuing Legal Education Board, with support of the Pro Bono Committee, decided to help train more lawyers to handle pro bono matters. Pro Bono March Madness was born! Through this annual series of CLE programs, the Atlanta Bar offers a wide array of programs, presented by various pro bono and legal services organizations, on a regular basis (each March), with the CLE credit and reporting handled by the ACLE coordinator, at low cost to lawyers. As a result, the Atlanta Bar facilitates training a substantially larger pool of volunteer lawyers and staff to assist the organizations and take referrals of more pro bono matters.

During the first year, 8 programs were offered by pro bono and public interest organizations, including AVLFF, and more than 200 attorneys were trained. The cost of the CLE programs was kept low through generous financial support of 11 Atlanta Bar Sections and the Atlanta Bar Foundation. Since then, Pro Bono March Madness has more than

¹ The Atlanta Bar obtained use of the registered trademark "MARCH MADNESS" for the March CLE programs, courtesy of the MMAA.



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doubled the number of CLE opportunities and trained more and more lawyers, all with financial support from Atlanta Bar Sections (except in 2007, when there were sufficient funds remaining from 2006). Most of those trained have been lawyers, although some programs also trained non-lawyer staff to provide valuable assistance. The program has grown steadily:

- 2006: 8 CLE programs; 238 attendees
- 2007: 11 CLE programs; 354 attendees
- 2008: 13 CLE programs; 351 attendees
- 2009: 13 CLE programs; 604 attendees
- 2010: 17 CLE programs; 710 attendees

In 2010, participating pro bono providers and their programs included:

- **AVLF:** Saturday Lawyers Program; One Child, One Lawyer; Wills and Advance Directives Project; Representing Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence in Civil Temporary Protective Order Hearings; Family Law for Low-Income Families; Guardian ad Litem Training
- **Georgia Appleseed:** Heir Property Project
- **GAIN:** Representing Immigrant Victims of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence; The Asylum Project
- **Atlanta Bar Association Family Law Section:** Adoption Initiative
- **Georgia Justice Project:** Lost Lessons from Groundhog Day - A Brown Bag Lunch & Learn
- **Catholic Charities:** Immigration Relief for Juveniles
- **Atlanta Legal Aid Society:** Grandparent/Relative Caregiver Adoption Project
- **American Immigration Lawyers Association, Atlanta Chapter:** The Ins and Outs of Immigration Court: Local Rules and Court Procedures
- **Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta:** Employment Law Review; Tax-Exempt Law 101 for Non-Tax Lawyers Providing Pro Bono Advice to Tax-Exempt Entities
- **Truancy Intervention Project:** Advocating for the Truant Child

A copy of the brochure for 2010 is included as pages 1-8 of the Appendix.

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The Atlanta Bar's leadership in facilitating the training of more lawyers to take pro bono cases, is one example of a program that has greatly expanded services to underserved segments of the population, in an effective and efficient manner, reducing some of the burden on the organizations, and achieving a high level of participation and commitment from the Atlanta Bar and its members. Among other places, the programs are promoted through the *Fulton County Daily Report*. See page 9 of the Appendix.

Expanded Strategic Focus on Pro Bono and Community Service: In 2008, the Atlanta Bar leadership developed a Strategic Plan for the organization, adopting 5 goals: Service, Membership, Programs, Reputation, and Organizational. The Service goal seeks to "Promote and increase participation in pro bono, public service and community service activities." In addition, the Atlanta Bar revised its logo to reflect the increased emphasis on Service:



The mission of the 112-year old Atlanta Bar is "to promote professionalism and the fair administration of justice in our community and to provide programs and benefits which serve our diverse membership." We are Lawyers Who Serve.

The Board adopted two key strategies under the goal of Service:

1. Implement board policy strongly encouraging section pro bono and community service programs; and
2. Devote one of the Atlanta Bar's four bar-wide luncheons each year to pro bono and community service awards and recognition with a keynote speaker and media coverage.

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Section Focus on Pro Bono: Prior to the Board adopting a formal policy of strongly encouraging the 21 Atlanta Bar Sections to engage their members in pro bono and community service activities, many of the Sections were already doing so. For example, in 2004, the Litigation Section adopted a policy encouraging its 1600+ members to take on at least one pro bono case each year and to contribute financially to pro bono and legal services organizations including AVLFF and ALAS. The Section also undertook to contribute a portion of its funds each year to support pro bono legal services. The Atlanta Bar also had undertaken a single project bar-wide when, in 2005-2006, under the leadership of then-president Liz Price, the Atlanta Bar helped recruit nearly 100 lawyers to train to participate in AVLFF's One Child One Lawyer program in the Fulton County Juvenile Court. See page 10 of the Appendix for one Atlanta Bar member's account of his experience as a One Child, One Lawyer volunteer.

Following the Board's adoption of a pro bono policy in 2008, all Sections were strongly encouraged to participate in pro bono and/or community service projects each year. Most Sections are now actively engaged in such projects. Some of the more significant ones are as follows:

Bankruptcy: Reaffirmation project to advise debtors before reaffirming contracts

Construction: Seminars for Georgia Association of Non-profit developers

Estate Planning & Probate: Staffing the Fulton County Probate Information Center²

Family Law: Divorce cases involving domestic violence; guardians ad litem in contested custody cases

Labor & Employment: Seminars to train lawyers to take referrals from the Pro Bono Partnership

Real Estate: AVLFF Saturday Lawyers program; Appleseed heir property project

Women in the Profession: Atlanta Legal Aid Cancer project

A number of Sections, including the **ACYL, Business & Finance, Corporate Counsel, Intellectual Property, Labor & Employment, Litigation, Tax, and Women in the Profession**, regularly encourage their members to volunteer for pro bono matters by sending them email from the Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta and/or AVLFF listing available pro bono

² The Atlanta Bar Association Estate Planning & Probate Section won the 2006 William B. Spann, Jr. Award for this work.



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opportunities. Many Sections also contribute financially to one or more pro bono and legal services organizations. In addition, the **Tax Section** provides financial support to the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic at Georgia State University. The Pro Bono Committee continues to work with all 21 Sections to identify appropriate opportunities for their members.

Celebrating Service Luncheon & Pro Bono Fair: All of the board leaders participating in the strategic planning process felt strongly that the Atlanta Bar should devote one of the Atlanta Bar's four bar-wide luncheons each year to pro bono and community service. The Pro Bono Committee created the Celebrating Service Luncheon & Pro Bono Fair, with the first event held in October 2008, with 240 in attendance. In planning the inaugural luncheon, the Committee felt that it was important to include a Pro Bono Fair, at which representatives of pro bono and legal services organizations could be available to talk about volunteer opportunities with their programs and to hand out brochures and other information. More than 22 pro bono, public interest, and community partner organizations participated in the first Pro Bono Fair in 2008.

Pro Bono Fair Participants included:

American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia
Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc., including the Health Law Partnership
Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Atlanta
Georgia Appleseed
Georgia Asylum & Immigration Network
Georgia Innocence Project
Georgia Justice Project
Georgia Law Center for the Homeless
Georgia Lawyers for the Arts
Georgia Legal Services Program, Inc., including the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project
Georgia State University College of Law Low-income Taxpayer Clinic
Keeping the Bond, Inc.
Lambda Legal
Latin American Association



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Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta
Southern Center for Human Rights
Southern Poverty Law Center
Truancy Intervention Project
Veterans Legal Clinic

and

Community Partners: Atlanta's Table, Atlanta Community Food Bank, and Everybody Wins!

Keynote speakers at the first Luncheon were former Fulton County Juvenile Court Chief Judge (now television judge) Glenda Hatchett and baseball legend Hank Aaron. Judge Hatchett was recognized for her role in creating and supporting TIP. Hank Aaron also supports TIP in addition to his own foundation which helps underprivileged youth. The Atlanta Bar presented its annual Pro Bono Award, as well as a new Community Service Award (see Awards below). AVLF, which had historically presented its annual volunteer awards at the Atlanta Bar Association annual meeting, presented its awards at this event. The event exceeded expectations and a new tradition was born.

The second Celebrating Service Luncheon & Pro Bono Fair was held in October 2009, with featured speaker, the Honorable David Nahmias, who had become the newest member of the Supreme Court of Georgia shortly before the event. More than 280 people attended the luncheon and fair, with representatives of 20 pro bono and legal services providers. The Atlanta Bar presented its annual Pro Bono and Community Service Awards, as well as a new Public Service Award (see Awards below). AVLF again presented its volunteer awards. In addition, the Lawyer Referral and Information Service of the Atlanta Bar, the Atlanta Bar Foundation, and the Gate City Bar, which co-sponsored the event, made substantial donations to AVLF, with donations to all of the providers participating in the fair (see below). The *Fulton County Daily Report* served as media sponsor for the event in 2009, promoting it through ads and articles. The event itself was covered both by the *Daily Report* and the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*. See pages 11-17 of the Appendix. By all accounts, the second event was even better than the first.

Each year, the Atlanta Bar's publication, *The Atlanta Lawyer*, dedicates one issue to promoting Celebrating Service, and in a subsequent issue, publishes pictures from the event. See pages 18-37 of the Appendix for articles and pictures from the 2008 and 2009 events.

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The third annual Celebrating Service event is scheduled for October 22, 2010, with new Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed as the featured speaker.

Awards & Recognition: In 2005, the Atlanta Bar created an annual Pro Bono Award to recognize an Atlanta Bar member, Section or Committee, for significant contributions during the preceding bar year for providing pro bono legal services to indigent individuals or non-profit organizations on matters or projects adopted, created or sponsored by or through the Atlanta Bar Association or one of its Sections. An annual Community Service Award was created in 2008 and a Public Service Award was created in 2009. Nomination forms for this year's awards are included at pages 38-40 of the Appendix. While many organizations and law firms present awards recognizing outstanding pro bono service and many lawyers who are members of the Atlanta Bar were already participating in pro bono, Atlanta Bar leaders believed that it was important for the Atlanta Bar to recognize its members, Sections and Committees who made significant contributions to recruit those within the Atlanta Bar to take on projects they might not otherwise be involved in through their firms. Recipients of the Pro Bono Award presented by the Atlanta Bar have included:

- Beth Baer, who chaired the Pro Bono Committee in 2004-2005;
- ACLE Board of Trustees for its efforts in creating Pro Bono March Madness;
- Liz Price, who during her term as President, recruited nearly 100 lawyers to handle One Child, One Lawyer cases;
- John Mills for his leadership of the Bankruptcy Section creating the reaffirmation project; and
- Estate Planning & Probate Section for staffing the Fulton County Probate Information Center.

Each of these efforts expanded the provision of civil legal services to areas previously underserved, and also engaged many lawyers who were not previously involved in pro bono.

Financial Support: Various Sections of the Atlanta Bar have historically provided financial support to AVLF, ALAS, and other pro bono providers to support pro bono work for indigent individuals and non-profit organizations. In addition, the Atlanta Bar Foundation, the charitable arm of the Atlanta Bar Association, also has provided support to such organizations. Many Sections and the Foundation also have supported the Atlanta Bar's



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Summer Law Intern Program which provides selected high school students opportunities to work during the summer in local courts and with non-profit organizations.

In 2009, in the wake of the economic crisis, and particularly the substantial decrease in IOLTA funds which historically supported a number of pro bono organizations, the Atlanta Bar Foundation and the Atlanta Bar Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) provided much needed financial support to AVLF to help it continue programs and minimize layoffs. AVLF received \$20,000 from the Foundation and \$50,000 from the LRIS. In addition, the LRIS donated \$1,000 to each of the pro bono and legal services providers who participated in the Celebrating Service Pro Bono Fair. See pages 41-42 of the Appendix. The Atlanta Bar received many letters of appreciation for the contributions. See pages 43-54 of the Appendix.

In the first quarter of 2010, both the Foundation and the LRIS formalized annual grants programs, through which organizations such as those who participate in the Pro Bono Fair, may apply for grants to support their work. Applications for these new programs are available and recipients of the initial grants will be announced during the October 22, 2010 Celebrating Service Luncheon.

The LRIS has funds to donate as a result of a rule change approved by the State Bar of Georgia Board of Governors in January 2004, then approved by the Supreme Court of Georgia, permitting Bar-sponsored referral services, such as the LRIS, to collect 15% of all fees over \$500 generated by referred cases. Fees collected by the LRIS since the rule change are used for operating the LRIS and providing grants for access to justice. The fees collected over the past five years generated enough reserve for the LRIS Board to make initial grants in 2009 and to establish a formal grants program.

The Foundation, through its Executive Director Sally Hogsette and its board, has expanded its fundraising efforts to augment its existing fundraising activities and programs and to substantially increase funds available for such grants. In addition, the Atlanta Bar Foundation has created a mechanism to facilitate fundraising by Atlanta Bar Sections to provide further support for charitable organizations.

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Furthering Support for Public Interest Lawyers and Organizations: While financial support and volunteer lawyers are critical to meeting the unmet needs of indigent individuals and non-profit organizations, money and lawyers alone are not enough. In December 2009, the Atlanta Bar heeded the call from several non-lawyer pro bono coordinators and lawyers to host a forum to discuss Economic Challenges & Creative Solutions. The program brought together representatives of legal service providers, law firms (lawyers and non-lawyers), law schools, and others to share challenges, build relationships, and to gain a better understanding of the non-monetary and non-lawyer resources available within the legal community, focusing on a holistic approach to addressing our community's legal needs. More than 55 people gathered at the State Bar of Georgia Conference Center on December 7, 2009 to discuss needs and opportunities. It was informative and motivating. The invitation and an article about the gathering are included at pages 55-57 of the Appendix.

The organizers felt strongly that the Forum should serve as the catalyst to further expand pro bono legal services and particularly to facilitate and increase participation of non-lawyers. Several specific efforts have begun since December 7.

- The Atlanta Bar created a new **Public Interest Committee**, chaired by Atlanta Legal Aid Society staff attorney Lindsay Verity. The committee was formed to provide a forum for public interest lawyers to network, develop professionally, and build meaningful relationships with the private bar. An inaugural social is scheduled for April 29, 2010. Subsequent events will include not only networking opportunities, but also CLE programs focused on professional development and topics of interest to public interest lawyers, such as the nuts and bolts of federal loan repayment assistance. One organizer's goal is for the Committee to become the 22nd Section of the Atlanta Bar Association.
- Beginning on May 5, 2010, the Atlanta Bar will host quarterly meetings of **Executive Directors and Deputy Directors** of pro bono and public interest organizations. This will provide a forum for these leaders to network and share ideas and insight into meeting the increasing needs of their increasing numbers of clients.



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- Earlier this month, the Atlanta Bar Association sent out the first electronic newsletter, **“Connections: Where Legal Service Providers Can Find Solutions to Their Nonlegal Needs,”** coordinated by Cheryl Naja of Alston & Bird, Sara Pheasant of Sutherland, and Mariana Pannell of the Atlanta Bar. The March 2010 issue is included as pages 58-59 of the Appendix.

Each program above alone meets the criteria for the William B. Spann, Jr. Award, in satisfying previously unmet legal needs or extending services to underserved segments of the population. Each program provides an effective mechanism to address unmet civil legal needs in that the Atlanta Bar staff provides the coordination and can reach the more than 6,300 members of the Atlanta Bar, many of whom are current or potential pro bono volunteers, across program lines and minimizing administrative hassles for the pro bono and legal services organizations. All of the programs individually and collectively have already demonstrated a high level of participation by Atlanta Bar members and Sections, and articles help demonstrate the widespread community support for the programs.

Taking the programs together, however, the Atlanta Bar has made a significant difference in the provision of civil legal services to the 12-county metro Atlanta community represented by membership in the Atlanta Bar. These widespread services help augment those provided by the legal services organizations with which we partner. And we recognize the need is great and we believe our potential is even greater. We would be honored to be recognized as the 2010 recipient of the William B. Spann, Jr. Award.

Contact persons for this nomination include the undersigned, who has just completed two years of service as chair of the Pro Bono Committee and Celebrating Service Committee, as well as the following persons:

David N. Schaeffer, Esq., President, Atlanta Bar Association 2009-2010
Holland Schaeffer Roddenbery & Blich, LLP
Suite 3560
191 Peachtree Street
Atlanta, GA 30303-1757
(404) 658-9550 Tel
(404) 589-8580 Fax
dschaeffer@hsrblaw.com



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Michael B. Terry, Esq., President, Atlanta Bar Association 2010-2011
Bondurant Mixson & Elmore, LLP
1201 West Peachtree Street, N.W.
Suite 3900, One Atlantic Center
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 881-4108 Tel
(404) 881-4111 Fax
terry@bmelaw.com

Diane O'Steen, Executive Director, Atlanta Bar Association
400 International Tower
229 Peachtree Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 832-6206 Tel
(404) 522-0269 Fax
dosteen@atlantabar.org

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely yours

Rita A. Sheffey

Rita A. Sheffey

Enclosures