





Spring 2008

#### Letter from the Committee Chair

Dear Fellow AILA Members.

What a year it has been for AILA Pro Bono! It's quite clear that our successes are due to your commitment as advocates to address the ever-increasing dire need for pro bono immigration legal services throughout the country. AILA's historical commitment to pro bono is strong, but as the association grows, so must our commitment to serve those in our communities who have limited means and limited access to immigration legal services. Combined with a growing need and importance on immigration, now is the time to raise that commitment.

The National Pro Bono Services Committee has worked hard shepherding the AILA Pro Bono Resolution to adoption and supporting AILA National staff in the launch of two innovative national initiatives: the AILA Military Assistance Program (MAP) and the AILA Pro Bono Challenge. In addition, we have recruited 10 more pro bono chapter liaisons than we had in 2006–07, to a total of 29. The liaisons are actively engaged in their chapters and communities and come together on monthly teleconferences to raise important issues regarding pro bono work and to strategize about solutions.

AlLA's National Citizenship Day event has grown significantly as well. In April 2008, 26 AlLA chapters will participate in this nationwide effort to provide free or low cost legal assistance to eligible legal permanent residents who wish to apply for U.S. citizenship.

As attorneys, we are in a unique position to influence and direct the provision of pro bono legal services to help meet the unmet needs of the immigrant communities in which we live and work. Making the time for pro bono work is not always easy, but it is always rewarding. Individually, we make a difference, but together, we can begin to change the world. I encourage you to accept the Challenge in this upcoming year to fit pro bono into your practice, and into your life.

Best Regards, Lincoln Stone AILA Pro Bono Services Committee Chair, 2007–08

#### 2007–08 National Pro Bono Services Committee Members

Lincoln Stone, Chair Iliana N. Holguin Robert E. Juceam Kathleen Moccio Mary L. Mucha Christopher Nugent

## Pro Bono Feature: Volunteers Assist U.S. Military Personnel through AILA MAP

By Susan Timmons

In January 2008, AILA embarked on a new mission—to assist U.S. military personnel whose spouses or families face unusual immigration law obstacles. The AILA Military Assistance Program (MAP) is a collaborative effort between AlLA and the Legal Assistance Offices of the U.S. Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps. The military Legal Assistance Offices provide free assistance to soldiers and their families, including active duty, reserve component, and retired military personnel, to maintain the highest level of readiness possible in the event a military member is deployed. Recently, however, JAG attorneys have been inundated with complex immigration legal questions. To resolve these cases successfully, they often need the assistance and experience of seasoned immigration attorneys. AlLA MAP is bringing these two groups together for the first time in this dynamic partnership.

AILA MAP matches AILA volunteer attorneys with military cases to provide free legal assistance to military members and their families facing the probability of their spouses or other immediate family members suffering serious immigration consequences in the absence of a skilled immigration advocate.

The government doesn't have numbers on how many military members are in these types of pre-

"While our military personnel are fighting for us across the globe, we, as immigration attorneys, are honored to be fighting for them at home," said AILA President Kathleen Campbell Walker. "Our military personnel need and deserve the peace of mind that their loved ones will be waiting for them when they return if legal remedies are available. AILA members are proud to offer this pro bono service to those placing themselves in harm's way through their service to our country."

dicaments, and the U.S. military does not have a policy to address such cases. Each military-related immigration matter is handled case-by-case, not by the military, but by immigration authorities.

Since the launch of AlLA MAP, 75 AlLA members have signed up to volunteer, and thus far, the program has assisted over 70 military cases. The cases cover the whole gamut of immigration law from adjustment of status to VAWA applications, TPS

cases, removal defense and everything in between. The program is quite diverse in the pro bono opportunities it offers to volunteers, and unlike many pro bono programs, many of the cases do not involve going to court.

Margaret D. Stock, an AILA member and Army Reserve Military Police officer who has testified before Congress about the immigration problems of military members and their families, played an instrumental role in working with the AILA Pro Bono Program to develop AILA MAP. Stock continues to provide critical guidance, serving as a mentor for many of the volunteers.

"Until AILA created this program, there was no central place where military members could seek expert help with their immigration problems," said Stock. "I applaud my fellow AILA members who have volunteered their time to make this program a success. AILA members' willingness to serve will make it easier for my fellow military members to serve our country with peace of mind."

For more information about AILA MAP or to volunteer, contact AILA Pro Bono Associate **Susan Timmons** at *stimmons@aila.org* or visit *www.aila.org/military.* 

# "Unselfish and noble actions are the most radiant pages in the biography of souls." —David Thomas, American Author

# AILA ProBono Challenge Launched!

On March 5, 2008, AILA launched the Pro Bono Challenge, an association-wide effort to inspire and support each other to publicly commit (or recommit) ourselves to pro bono service. The response from the membership was nothing short of tremendous. In the first 24 hours, 85 of your peers accepted the Challenge by taking the online pledge which states:

Mindful that AILA members are uniquely positioned to assist in influencing the provision of pro bono immigration legal services to meet unmet needs in immigrant communities, I pledge to complete a minimum of 50 hours of pro bono services to help the community which I serve, in accordance with the Guidelines of the Challenge.

We are asking all members to take the Challenge Pledge, and in return receive support, inspiration, and recognition from your colleagues. Although the pledge asks you to commit to a minimum goal, we encourage you to set your own aspirational target that you have to stretch and reach to achieve. The Challenge distinguishes 4 levels of pro bono achievement to which you can aspire. Check out www.aila.org/probonochallenge for more information.

AILA members have a long and respected history of being extremely generous with their time by providing pro bono services to their communities. Even with the valiant efforts of so many, the need for pro bono continues to grow. Increased worksite enforcement, community "sweeps" by local authori-

ties, and a broken immigration system have brought about a need for immigration legal assistance that is greater than ever before. As attorneys, we have a professional responsibility to help meet this need. And as attorneys specializing in immigration practice as well as being members of AlLA, we are in a unique position to act.

More than 120 AILA members have accepted the Challenge to date. Join your friends and colleagues: sign the pledge today and take the first step towards meeting the Challenge!

### Los Angeles County Bar Association Immigration Legal Assistance Project

The Los Angeles County Bar Association Immigration Legal Assistance Project (ILAP) provides immigration legal assistance and counseling to low income persons in the greater Southern California area. The project's ideal location on the 3rd floor of the USCIS federal building in downtown Los Angeles guarantees a steady stream of clients seeking solutions to their immigration problems. Often, a consultation by an experienced immigration attorney can short-circuit hours spent in long USCIS Infopass lines.

Experienced staff immigration attorneys and volunteer attorneys as well as law students provide legal advice and consultation to over 7,500 individuals each year. Through its immigration law course and volunteer training program, the project provides supervised training to law students, volunteer attorneys, and paralegals. The immigration project—having no geographic restrictions—assists persons from all countries and territories. Last year the project was fortunate to have more than 47 volunteer attorneys and law students participate by providing over 2,800 hours of pro bono legal work. Volunteers help clients complete citizenship applications, travel permits, work permits, adjustment of status, and family petitions.

AlLA member **Mary Mucha** is ILAP's directing attorney. If you practice in the Los Angeles area and are interested in volunteering, please contact Mary at marymucha@aol.com.

#### A Recent Success...

A client from Cuba was homeless and living on the streets of downtown Los Angeles. He lost all documentation showing he entered the United States in May 1980 under a special law called the Cuban-Haitian Entrant Status Act. He needed help but could not apply for public benefits because he had no proof of legal status. After being turned away from USCIS, a building security guard brought this client to the ILAP office.

The Project's pro bono attorneys and staff quickly went into action. The pro bono attorneys made an appointment to speak to an immigration officer. The database confirmed his status as a Cuban-Haitian, but USCIS would not give him an I-94 document confirming his legal status. After a week of discussions between the Project Director and USCIS upper management, the immigration service confirmed that it did have jurisdiction to issue the I-94 and would do so. Volunteer attorneys immediately prepared the necessary form and fee waiver request. Ultimately, USCIS granted the waiver and the client received his I-94. With this document, the client is now eligible for general relief, housing, and other public benefits. Submitted by Mary Mucha.

#### **Asylum Program of Arizona**

The Asylum Program of Arizona (APA) is a nonprofit legal services agency that serves low income non-detained asylum-seekers. The program was founded in Tucson, AZ, nearly 20 years ago by immigrants, human rights advocates, attorneys, and religious workers. Today, APA is a part of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest's Multi-Cultural Division.

APA provides a number of services to qualifying asylum-seekers including case preparation, help filling out all necessary immigration forms and applications, and representation before USCIS and Immigration Court. APA has also been working to expand its services by providing clothing and food donations, ESL tutoring, and mental health and medical referrals. Because asylum-seekers often arrive in the United States with few resources and must wait five months to receive work authorization, basic assistance is often needed.

Throughout its history, the program has depended upon volunteers and financial contributions. Volunteers help to meet a number of APA's needs by serving on its pro bono attorney panel, providing interpretation and translation for clients, ESL tutoring, and help with basic needs.

APA can always use support from the community! The office is located at 710 East Speedway Blvd., Tucson, AZ, 85719. To find out more about APA, contact Volunteer Coordinator **Annetta Landay** at (520) 623-4555 or email her at <code>vtwo@lss-sw.org</code>. For more information, check out <code>www.lss-sw.org</code>. Submitted by Annetta Landay.

#### Pro Bono Resolution

**RESOLVED** that the American Immigration Lawyers Association adopts the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Association and its Members recognize equal access to justice for all persons as essential to the just, fair, and efficient administration of our immigration laws, courts, and legal system; and

**WHEREAS**, there is an increasingly dire need for pro bono immigration legal services for the indigent, needy, and disadvantaged throughout the country; and

**WHEREAS**, the Association and its Members are in a unique position to influence and direct pro bono immigration legal services to meet the unmet legal needs of indigent and disadvantaged persons; and

**WHEREAS**, each Member as an attorney admitted to practice law has a fundamental ethical and professional obligation to render pro bono legal services, which the Association acknowledges, endorses and desires to supplement; and now, therefore, it is

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Governors of the American Immigration Lawyers Association:

- (1) Will draft standards setting forth recommendations regarding the provision and facilitation of pro bono legal services by Members. If adopted by the Board, such Standards will be readily accessible and disseminated to all Members. The Association will undertake specific initiatives designed to maximize provision and facilitation of pro bono legal services by Members.
- (2) Will enhance efforts to recognize Members who provide or facilitate pro bono legal services, and will strongly encourage all Members through appropriate incentives and other means to provide or facilitate pro bono legal services.
- (3) Will encourage Members to contribute financial support to not-for-profit legal services providers.
- (4) Will support the provision and facilitation of pro bono representation by assisting in activities such as publicity, coordination, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and public relations.

# Pro Bono Gossip

- A Saturday afternoon well spent. On April 19, 2008, AILA will sponsor its second annual Citizenship Day, a single-day workshop with sites around the country providing assistance to lawful permanent residents eligible for naturalization. Teams of volunteer immigration attorneys, paralegals, interpreters, and other community members will prepare naturalization applications for free or low-cost. Twenty-six chapters have committed to participate to date. We hope that you will consider taking some time on a Saturday afternoon to be part of this tremendous national pro bono effort. Check out www.aila.org/citizenshipday or contact your local Pro Bono Liaison or Chapter Chair for more information.
- Giving credit where credit is due. Please join the AILA National Pro Bono Services Committee in congratulating and celebrating our colleagues who have devoted considerable time and effort to pro bono service this year. At a time when the need for immigration legal assistance is growing exponentially, many of your AILA peers have stepped up to meet this rising challenge. Spend some time with us honoring this work at the Pro Bono Reception at the Annual Conference in Vancouver, Saturday, June 28, 2008, at 4:00–5:15 pm.
- Congratulations to us! AILA recently won the Award of Excellence in the 2008 Associations Advance America Awards program, a national competition sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) and the Center for Association Leadership. AILA received the award for the nationwide Citizenship Day project. The competition recognized top association projects/programs that "advance American society." Citizenship Day is now in the running to receive a Summit Award—ASAE and the Center's top recognition for association programs to be awarded in September 2008.



- Kudos in Colorado. Congrats go out to the Colorado Chapter, which was
  recently recognized with an award by the Denver Bar Association and the
  Colorado Lawyers Committee, co-sponsors of the bimonthly Legal Night
  clinics. Colorado members have volunteered countless hours at two local clinics for the Legal Night Program where community members can
  obtain legal resource information and referrals.
- Resolved: Justice for all! At the January meeting in Hawaii, the AlLA Board
  of Governors unanimously passed a resolution expressing the Association's commitment to pro bono service. AlLA has made an institutional
  commitment to address the escalating need for pro bono immigration
  legal services to the indigent, needy, and disadvantaged throughout the
  country. AlLA National and its 36 chapters worldwide pledge to provide an
  environment that enables you to be a part of this movement for change.

"AILA's program truly embodies the spirit of the Associations Advance America campaign. It is an honor and an inspiration to showcase this activity as an example of the many contributions associations are making to advance American society," proclaimed 2007–08 Associations Advance America Committee Chair Matthew D'Uva, CAE, president of SOCAP International.



# **ABOUT AILA**

AILA National Office Suite 300 1331 G Street, NW Washington, DC 20005 www.aila.org The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) is the national bar association of more than 11,000 attorneys and law professors who practice and teach immigration law. Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that provides continuing legal education, publications and information, professional services, and expertise through its 36 chapters and over 50 national committees. AILA is an affiliated organization of the American Bar Association and is represented in the ABA House of Delegates. For more information about AILA, please visit our website at www.aila.org.