



Summary of The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle

While lawyers and law firms support a variety of charitable initiatives, lawyers have a special professional responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to our justice system. Fulfilling this responsibility requires contributions of time and money as well as a strategic use of the influence that lawyers and law firms have in our community. The Chicago Bar Foundation, through its Managing Partners Advisory Committee, has established the CBF Law Firm Leadership Circle and an accompanying statement of principles to underscore the critical role that law firms in Chicago play in ensuring equal access to justice in our community.

These principles and the rationale behind each of them are detailed in the accompanying documents. In summary, to be a part of the CBF Law Firm Leadership Circle, firms must make the commitments set forth below. (As reflected in the chart below and explained in the accompanying documents, higher levels of pro bono and financial commitment can qualify a firm for the Gold or Platinum levels in the Leadership Circle).

1. Adopt policies encouraging each attorney in the firm to do at least 35 hours of pro bono work each year;
2. Advocate for adequate legal aid funding from the IOLTA program; federal, state and local government; and cy pres awards;
3. Provide in-kind marketing, training and administrative support for legal aid agencies;
4. Provide firm financial support for legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area in an amount equivalent to at least \$300 per lawyer in the firm's Chicago office each year;
5. Participate in the annual CBF Investing in Justice Campaign and match contributions from individual attorneys in whole or in part; and
6. Strive to support Public Interest Law Fellowships, Rotations and Internships.

	Annual Firm Contribution	Annual Pro Bono Aspirational Commitment	Investing in Justice Campaign	Other Leadership Circle Commitments
Silver	\$300 or more per atty	35 hours or more per atty	X	X
Gold	\$600 or more per atty	50 hours or more per atty	X	X
Platinum	\$1,000 or more per atty	50+ hours per atty	X	X

For more information about the Law Firm Leadership Circle and Statement of Principles, please contact CBF Executive Director Bob Glaves at (312) 554-1205 or bglaves@chicagobar.org.



Statement of Principles for The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle

As a profession, lawyers have a special responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to our justice system. Fulfilling that responsibility requires contributions of time and money as well as a strategic use of the influence lawyers have in our community. By committing to this Statement of Principles and becoming part of *The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle*, law firms demonstrate their leadership and make a critical investment in the future of our profession and our system of justice.

1. Provide Financial Support for Pro Bono, Legal Aid and Access to Justice

- We will make financial support for legal aid and related access to justice initiatives a priority within our firm's overall charitable giving.
- Specifically, our firm will annually contribute a combined amount equal to at least \$300 per attorney in our Chicago office to support legal aid and public interest law organizations serving the Chicago area. Recognizing that this is a minimum threshold that many firms already exceed, our firm will aspire to contribute at higher levels, with the **Gold** (\$600 per attorney) and **Platinum** (\$1000 per attorney) giving levels as aspirational goals.
- Above and beyond the firm's other contributions, we also will participate in The Chicago Bar Foundation's annual *Investing in Justice Campaign*; encourage lawyers in the firm to contribute to the *Campaign*; and match, in whole or in part, *Campaign* contributions from individual lawyers in the firm.

2. Adopt Written Policies and Practices to Encourage and Support Pro Bono Work

- We will adopt and periodically distribute written policies that encourage each attorney in the firm to provide pro bono legal services, adopt practices that encourage our lawyers to do pro bono work, and provide our lawyers with credit for compensation and/or advancement purposes for pro bono work.
- Specifically, our firm will encourage each lawyer in the firm to devote at least 35 hours per year to pro bono work. Recognizing that this is a minimum threshold that many firms already exceed, our firm will consider policies with higher hourly targets for pro bono work, with the **Gold** (50 hours or more per attorney) and **Platinum** (50+ hours per attorney) levels as aspirational goals.
- We will consider a full-time attorney position devoted to leading and coordinating the firm's pro bono and public interest activities, or adopt an alternative structure that underscores the firm's commitment to pro bono and provides meaningful support to our attorneys for pro bono work.

3. Adopt Additional Policies and Practices to Support Legal Aid and Access to Justice

a. Maximize Income from the Firm's IOLTA Accounts

- We will maximize the use of *IOLTA* accounts within the firm in accordance with the Illinois Supreme Court Rules and advocate with our bank(s) to maximize interest rates payable on these accounts.

b. Advocate for Adequate Government Funding for Legal Aid and Access to Justice

- We will support advocacy efforts at the federal, state, and local levels dedicated to ensuring adequate funding for legal aid and access to justice.

- c. **Promote Cy Pres Awards for Pro Bono, Legal Aid, and Access to Justice**
 - We will encourage our attorneys to advocate for cy pres awards to go to support pro bono, legal aid, and access to justice initiatives.
- d. **Provide Marketing, Training and Administrative Support for Legal Aid and Public Interest Law Organizations**
 - To the extent practicable, we will make approved CLE programs available to legal aid and public interest attorneys; provide marketing, administrative and legal support for legal aid and public interest law organizations; host meetings and events for these organizations; and encourage the firm’s vendors to provide pro bono support to these organizations.
- e. **Support Public Interest Law Internships, Fellowships and Rotations**
 - We will support *Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI)* Fellowships and strive to sponsor at least one *PILI* Internship each year.
 - We will consider adopting paid rotation programs that allow our attorneys up to one year working at a local legal aid or public interest law organization.
 - We will consider sponsoring public interest law fellowships through Equal Justice Works or similar programs.

Our firm commits to this Statement of Principles for the Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle

Firm: _____

Signed: _____

Name (print) and Title: _____

Date: _____

(Optional)
Our Firm Commits to Meeting the Criteria for the Gold Level of the Leadership Circle _____

Our Firm Commits to Meeting the Criteria for the Platinum Level of the Leadership Circle _____

For more information about the Law Firm Leadership Circle and Statement of Principles, please contact CBF Executive Director Bob Glaves at (312) 554-1205 or bglaves@chicagobar.org.



**Background Information on
The Statement of Principles for
The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle**

Introduction

While lawyers and law firms support a variety of charitable initiatives, as a profession lawyers have a special responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to our justice system. As the Preamble to the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct underscores, “[i]t is the responsibility of those licensed as officers of the court to use their training, experience and skills to provide services in the public interest for which compensation may not be available,” and “[i]t is the responsibility of those who manage law firms to create an environment that is hospitable to the rendering of a reasonable amount of uncompensated service by lawyers practicing in that firm.” Fulfilling this responsibility requires contributions of time and money as well as a strategic use of the influence lawyers and law firms have in our community.

There is a great need for increased financial support for Chicago’s legal aid organizations and related access to justice initiatives. A 2005 study, *The Illinois Legal Aid Safety Net: A Report on the Legal Needs of Low-Income Illinoisans* (available at www.chicagobarfoundation.org), found that over the course of a year, tens of thousands of less fortunate Chicagoans were unable to obtain legal assistance that was often critical to their safety and independence, and hundreds of thousands more attempted to solve often complex legal problems on their own. This widespread lack of access is a crisis not just for our community, but for the legal profession and our overall system of justice.

Legal aid organizations provide the necessary “infrastructure” to support pro bono work for area lawyers and law firms (i.e., pro bono programs with solid screening, referral, training and support functions for volunteers), and provide critical legal assistance to the most vulnerable members of our community in matters where pro bono is not a practical solution.

Both individual attorneys and law firms have a critical role to play, but as leaders of the profession law firms need to set the right tone on this issue. This Statement of Principles builds on the commitment that many law firms and corporations previously made through the Public Interest Law Initiative’s (PILI) “Statement of Principles Regarding Pro Bono Legal Services” in 2002. By committing to this Statement of Principles and becoming part of *The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle*, law firms demonstrate their leadership and make an investment in the future of our profession and our system of justice.

The Principles

1. Provide Financial Support for Pro Bono, Legal Aid and Access to Justice

Firms should make financial support for pro bono, legal aid and related access to justice initiatives a priority within their overall charitable giving.

- *The firm will annually contribute a combined amount equal to at least \$300 per attorney in our Chicago office to support legal aid and public interest law organizations serving the Chicago area. Recognizing that this is a minimum threshold that many firms already exceed, our firm will aspire to contribute at higher levels, with the **Gold** (\$600 per attorney) and **Platinum** (\$1000 per attorney) giving levels as aspirational goals.*

The \$300 per attorney threshold is intended only as a minimum standard and starting point for law firm giving.¹ Many Chicago firms already exceed this threshold in giving to legal aid, but there currently is no tracking mechanism for this uniquely important part of law firm philanthropy. Firms are encouraged to provide financial support at higher levels, with the **Gold level** of \$600 per attorney or the **Platinum level** of \$1,000 per attorney as aspirational standards. A law firm's financial support for local legal aid organizations is an integral part of the firm's pro bono program, as these organizations provide the infrastructure and support that are critical to successful law firm pro bono programs.

Under the minimum standard, a firm with 200 attorneys in Chicago should give a combined total of at least \$60,000 to individual legal aid organizations and The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF).² (A complete list of eligible organizations is attached). The firm could distribute this amount among various organizations or make several larger donations. For example, the firm could give \$10,000 each to five qualifying legal aid organizations—or \$5,000 to 10 such organizations--and \$10,000 to the CBF, among many other combinations.

Once a firm has reached the minimum threshold for core contributions, a number of other contributions can be counted in determining whether the firm meets the Gold or Platinum levels. As noted in more detail on the attached spreadsheet and “key”, those contributions include a firm's matching contributions for the *CBF Investing in Justice Campaign* (see below); fellowships and rotations; and certain other contributions to law school clinics and other organizations that support legal aid and access to justice in the Chicago area. Thus, if a firm made:

- Direct contributions equivalent to \$400 per lawyer in the firm to legal aid organizations and the CBF, AND
- Matching contributions averaging \$250 per lawyer to the CBF as part of the *Investing in Justice Campaign* and fellowship contributions averaging \$100 per lawyer,

The combined donation of \$750 per lawyer would qualify the firm for **Gold** status.

- *Above and beyond the firm's other contributions, we also will participate in The Chicago Bar Foundation's annual **Investing in Justice Campaign**; encourage lawyers in the firm to contribute to the Campaign; and match, in whole or in part, Campaign contributions from individual lawyers in the firm.*

¹ The minimum firm support amount (\$300 per attorney) is based on the Philadelphia Bar Association's successful “Raising the Bar” Campaign. In Philadelphia, 133 firms signed onto this Campaign last year, with many giving at higher levels--see www.philadelphiabar.org for more information. Other cities also have set benchmarks for law firm giving to legal aid. For example, in San Francisco, a percentage of firm revenues is used as the target for giving, while in New York a special campaign through the Legal Aid Society sets the minimum standard for law firms at \$600 per attorney.

² **The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF)** works to ensure equal access to justice for all Chicagoans and supports all of the major pro bono and legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area. As the charitable arm of The Chicago Bar Association (CBA), the CBF's mission is a reflection of the CBA's strong commitment to this fundamental American principle and our belief that the huge and persistent gap in access to our civil justice system is a call to action for the legal community. The CBF takes a strategic approach to closing this gap by building the capacity of our pro bono and legal aid system through grants, advocacy and other support, and by aggressively working to eliminate systemic barriers to equal access to justice. The CBF's work is made possible by the generous support of more than one hundred law firms and corporations and thousands of individual donors.

The CBF's annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* is a communitywide fundraising campaign through which thousands of individual lawyers at Chicago law firms and corporations come together to build the capacity of the pro bono and legal aid system in the Chicago area. The *Campaign*, which takes place in March each year, requests a donation from each attorney at a participating firm (with a suggested minimum of \$100 per associate and \$500 per partner), and asks that this amount be matched, in whole or in part, by the law firm. 100% of proceeds from the *Campaign* go directly to grants for the approximately 40 legal aid and public interest law organizations and related access to justice initiatives the CBF supports.

Matching contributions are a proven incentive for increasing individual giving. Even a partial match has been shown to increase individual contributions, and that impact increases as the amount of the match increases. Because the *Investing in Justice Campaign* is geared towards individual lawyers and is intended to raise funds above and beyond what law firms already are giving to the cause, firm matching contributions for the *Campaign* do not count towards the \$300 per attorney minimum threshold for law firms. However, once a firm has met the minimum threshold, firm matching contributions can be considered in determining whether the firm meets the Leadership Circle's *Gold* or *Platinum* levels for law firm giving.

2. Adopt Written Policies and Practices to Encourage and Support Pro Bono Work

Along with providing funding for legal aid, Chicago firms should create an environment that encourages and supports their attorneys in pro bono work.

The *Pro Bono Initiative*, a joint initiative of the CBF and PILI, provides resources and assistance to law firms on pro bono issues. More information on the *Pro Bono Initiative* is available on the project's website: www.probonoinitiative.org. Another important pro bono resource for firms is www.IllinoisProBono.org, a statewide website that offers a wide array of information, resources and training for pro bono attorneys. Also, the CBF's Pro Bono Support Program provides resources and assistance to individual lawyers interested in pro bono; more information is available at www.chicagobarfoundation.org.

- *We will adopt and periodically distribute written policies that encourage each attorney in the firm to provide pro bono legal services, adopt practices that encourage our lawyers to do pro bono work, and provide our lawyers with credit for compensation and/or advancement purposes for pro bono work.*
- *Specifically, our firm will encourage each lawyer in the firm to devote at least 35 hours per year to pro bono work. Recognizing that this is a minimum threshold that many firms already exceed, our firm will consider policies with higher hourly targets for pro bono work, with the **Gold** (50 hours or more per attorney) and **Platinum** (50+ hours per attorney) levels as aspirational goals.*

Firms should adopt policies that encourage and enable each attorney at the firm to devote at least 35 hours per year to pro bono activities. Many firms already have policies in place that exceed that minimum threshold, and policies that encourage each lawyer to devote at least 50 hours of pro bono work (consistent with the Chicago Bar Association's standing Pro Bono Resolution) or more should be aspirational goals. As part of these policies, firms should provide lawyers with credit for compensation and/or advancement purposes for pro bono work. For example, some area firms already have a policy counting up to 50 or 100 yearly pro bono hours as billable hours. Others count pro bono hours towards bonus credit or for advancement purposes, and many do all of these things.

In addition to adopting and periodically distributing pro bono policies, firms should adopt practices and procedures to encourage pro bono within the firm. Some best practices include encouraging pro bono as part of the firm's orientation program for new attorneys, annual pro bono recognition events

within the firm, and promotion of pro bono success stories within firm publications, to name just a few. Firms also should adopt procedures that encourage attorneys who are retiring or winding down their practices to engage in pro bono work and provide support for those efforts.

- *We will consider a full-time attorney position devoted to leading and coordinating the firm's pro bono and public interest activities, or adopt an alternative structure that underscores the firm's commitment to pro bono and provides meaningful support to our attorneys for pro bono work.*

Several Chicago firms now have full-time attorney positions within the firm devoted to pro bono and public interest work, and several others have full-time non-lawyer directors who work closely with a Partner in charge of pro bono within the firm. By creating a full-time Pro Bono Director position, signatory firms underscore their commitment to pro bono service as well as provide assistance for their attorneys in becoming involved. There are other structures that firms have successfully used to provide support their attorneys for pro bono work as well, but the common denominator is strong and visible support from the firm's leadership.

3. Adopt Additional Policies and Practices to Support Legal Aid and Access to Justice

Firms should also offer other assistance by maximizing the impact of their IOLTA accounts; advocating for adequate government funding for legal aid and access to justice; encouraging *cy pres* awards to support these efforts; sponsoring internships, fellowships and rotations; and providing other support such as including legal aid attorneys at in-house training sessions.

a. Maximize Income from the Firm's IOLTA Accounts

- *We will maximize the use of IOLTA accounts within the firm in accordance with the Illinois Supreme Court Rules and advocate with our bank(s) to maximize interest rates payable on these accounts.*

The IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts) program is an Illinois Supreme Court mandated program that requires attorneys holding nominal or short-term client funds to place those funds into pooled interest-bearing trust accounts. The interest gained on these pooled trust accounts is paid to the Lawyers' Trust Fund of Illinois for grants to legal aid programs. IOLTA revenue collectively amounts to several million dollars per year and is one of the principal sources of funding for legal aid in Illinois. By maximizing use of these accounts and advocating with banks for the payment of fair interest rates on these accounts, law firms can substantially increase funding for legal aid programs. More information on IOLTA is available on the website for the Lawyers Trust Fund: www.ltf.org.

b. Advocate for Adequate Government Funding for Legal Aid and Access to Justice

- *We will support advocacy efforts at the federal, state and local levels dedicated to ensuring adequate funding for legal aid and access to justice.*

While lawyers clearly have a leadership responsibility on these issues, equal access to justice is central to our democratic society, integral to the effective functioning of our justice system and a critical part of the safety net for vulnerable members of our community. Thus, just as is true with other critical services such as medical care and housing—and as part of the obligation to properly fund the judicial branch of government—federal, state and local governments have the primary funding responsibility for legal aid and related access to justice initiatives, in partnership with the legal community and other public and private sources. Law firm leadership is essential in the advocacy efforts to ensure adequate government funding for these purposes.

c. Promote Cy Pres Awards for Pro Bono, Legal Aid, and Access to Justice

- *We will encourage our attorneys to advocate for cy pres awards to go to support pro bono, legal aid, and access to justice initiatives.*

Cy pres awards, which most often arise from the unclaimed proceeds from class-action lawsuit settlements, can be a major source of funding for legal aid. For example, The Chicago Bar Foundation recently received a \$2 million award that allowed the CBF to create a substantial loan repayment assistance program for legal aid attorneys. *Cy pres* awards of any size, however, can increase the capacity of area legal aid organizations and make the justice system more user-friendly and accessible for the public, and firms should encourage their lawyers to advocate for these awards to be used for this purpose as much as possible.

d. *Provide Marketing, Training and Administrative Support for Legal Aid and Public Interest Law Organizations*

- *To the extent practicable, we will make approved CLE programs available to legal aid and public interest attorneys; provide marketing, administrative and legal support for legal aid and public interest law organizations; host meetings and events for these organizations; and encourage the firm's vendors to provide pro bono support to these organizations.*

Just a few examples of the ways that signatory firms can fulfill this responsibility are by inviting their legal aid counterparts to a firm CLE program on ethics or management issues; by providing spare office space for use by these organizations; by providing pro bono legal assistance for a legal aid organization's lease or bylaws; by hosting a fundraiser or board meeting for a legal aid organization; or encouraging the firm's vendors (e.g., printers, court reporters, etc.) to consider providing pro bono services to one or more of these organizations. The CBF will help develop a mechanism for firms to inform legal aid organizations of available law firm training opportunities.

e. *Support Public Interest Law Internships, Fellowships and/or Rotations*

- *We will support PILI Fellowships and strive to sponsor at least one PILI Internship each year.*

The Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) sponsors law student internships at area legal aid organizations and coordinates summer fellowships for new firm associates. Public Interest Law Initiative Internships and Fellowships serve a dual purpose: they supply legal aid and public interest organizations with assistance through the aid of law students and recent graduates; and they expose law students and newer attorneys to the critical role that public interest law organizations play in the profession, often forming the basis for a long-term relationship between the intern or fellow and the host organization. More information about PILI is available from the Public Interest Law Initiative (www.pili-law.org).

PILI's Graduate Fellowship Program provides for the furlough of law firms' incoming associates to work for PILI-affiliated agencies during their "bar exam summers" -- the summer before the associates begin work at their firms. Law firms may choose to sponsor one or more of their incoming associates, who are essentially "in residence" at an area legal aid or public interest law organization for a reduced 300-hour summer schedule (typically 5 half-time weeks before the bar exam, and 5 full-time weeks after the exam). Most, but not all, firms offer compensation to their Fellows and set their own payment structure. The majority of participating law firms offer a simple stipend ranging from \$7,000 to \$12,000; whatever the payment structure, all participating law firms pay their Fellows directly.

PILI internships, on the other hand, are for law students who are current 1Ls or 2Ls at accredited law schools. Interns work a full-time ten-week 400-hour summer schedule. While law firms directly pay their PILI Fellows, the student Interns are paid with proceeds from PILI's yearly fundraising. Participating law firms support at least one PILI Intern by providing a \$5,000 charitable donation to PILI. Donations to PILI to sponsor internships can be counted towards the minimum \$300 per attorney threshold.

- *We will consider adopting paid rotation programs that allow our attorneys up to one year working at a local legal aid or public interest law organization.*

Rotation programs are common within law firms on the east coast, and Chicago firms recently have begun to utilize them as a way to expand the capacity of the legal aid system while giving their associates valuable hands-on experience. A common rotation program model is to allow a new associate to split his or her first-year salary over two years and work the first year at a local legal aid agency and the second year at the firm. More information about rotation programs is available from the Public Interest Law Initiative (www.pili-law.org).

- *We will consider sponsoring public interest law fellowships through Equal Justice Works or through similar programs.*

Equal Justice Works is a national organization that gives young attorneys the opportunity to pursue two-year paid fellowships at a wide variety of legal aid and public interest law organizations throughout the country. A number of law firms have sponsored Equal Justice Works fellowships in Chicago, and more information is available at www.equaljusticeworks.org. Some firms sponsor their own similar fellowship programs as well.

For more information about the various commitments set forth in this Statement of Principles, please contact CBF Executive Director Bob Glaves at (312) 554-1205 or bglaves@chicagobar.org.

**Qualifying CBF-Supported Legal Aid Organizations for
The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle**

Updated August, 2007

The following legal aid and public interest law organizations receive organizational support grants from The Chicago Bar Foundation, and thus have been carefully vetted through a comprehensive grant review process. Law firm contributions to The Chicago Bar Foundation and to any of the organizations listed below--or for those where only a specific project is supported (noted in italics), contributions that support that project--can be considered as qualifying contributions for purposes of The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle:

Access Living - *Civil Rights Project*
AIDS Legal Council of Chicago
Cabrini Green Legal Aid Clinic (CGLA)
CAIR – Chicago - *Civil Rights Project*
CARPLS (Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services)
Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR)
Center for Economic Progress - *Midwest Tax Clinic*
Centro Romero - *Latin American Legal Assistance Services*
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless - *Law Project*
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM)
Chicago Legal Clinic (CLC)
Chicago Volunteer Legal Services (CVLS)
Community Economic Development Law Project (CEDLP)
Domestic Violence Legal Clinic
Equip for Equality
Evanston Community Defender
Families' and Children's AIDS Network (FCAN) - *Family Options Project*
The Family Defense Center
Farmworker Advocacy Project
First Defense Legal Aid
Health & Disability Advocates (HDA)
Illinois Legal Aid Online
John Howard Association
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (LCBH)
Lawyers for the Creative Arts (LCA)
Legal Aid Bureau of Metropolitan Family Services (LAB)
Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF)
Life Span - *Center for Legal Services & Advocacy*
Midwest Center on Law & the Deaf (MCLD)
National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)
Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI)
The Roger Baldwin Foundation of the ACLU - *Children's Initiative*
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Uptown People's Law Center
World Relief-Chicago - *Immigration Legal Services*



Key for CBF Law Firm Leadership Circle—Law Firm Giving (See Contributions spreadsheet)

**** All individual reporting by participating law firms will be kept confidential by the CBF. The only information that will be publicly reported will be whether a firm meets the criteria for the Leadership Circle, and if so, whether the firm meets the Gold or Platinum standards.**

Core Contributions

Law firm support for the CBF and the many outstanding legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area is a critical investment in the “pro bono infrastructure” for our community. Firms need effective legal aid organizations as partners in order to ensure effective pro bono programs, and this core financial support is a necessary complement to law firm pro bono policies.

Monetary donations - includes all unrestricted cash contributions made to qualifying organizations included on the attached spreadsheet, including special event sponsorships.

Qualifying In-kind contributions- includes in-kind contributions made to qualifying organizations that involve a direct additional cost to the donor firm and monetary benefit to the organization. Examples include donating office space, direct costs for hosting an event (e.g., catering), or printing and reproduction.

CBF Investing in Justice Campaign

The CBF Investing in Justice Campaign works to build the capacity of the overall pro bono and legal aid system. The Campaign is geared towards individual lawyers, but firms are encouraged to match the individual contributions of their attorneys in whole or in part as part of the firm’s Campaign. Like the “Additional Contributions” noted below, the firm’s matching contributions for the Campaign count for credit towards the Gold or Platinum levels of the CBF Law Firm Leadership Circle. 100% of the funds raised in the Campaign go directly to CBF grants that support Chicago’s legal aid and public interest law organizations and related initiatives.

Additional Contributions

In addition to the core contributions defined above, several other types of law firm financial contributions can be considered in determining whether a firm has attained the Gold or Platinum levels of the Leadership Circle, including the following:

Fellowships and Rotations

Qualifying fellowships include any fellowships sponsored by the law firm that are focused on improving access to justice for low-income and vulnerable members of the Chicago area. These fellowships can include fellowships sponsored through Equal Justice Works, other fellowships sponsored directly by the firm, or PILI fellowships at one of the organizations funded by the CBF.

Firm-sponsored rotations at one of these organizations, in which the firm pays one of their lawyers to work at these agencies for a period of several months or more, also can be counted.

Other Qualifying Contributions

Law School Clinics

Firm contributions that directly support law school clinical programs that provide free or very low-cost legal services to low-income and other vulnerable members of the community also can be counted.

Other

Contributions to other organizations that only partially support legal aid and access to justice in the Chicago area (e.g., ABA Fund for Justice and Education, Illinois Bar Foundation, general contributions to Equal Justice Works) may also be counted on a 50% basis.



The Chicago Bar Foundation Law Firm Leadership Circle

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated August, 2007

What is the purpose of the Law Firm Leadership Circle?

The Law Firm Leadership Circle and accompanying statement of principles are intended to embody best practices for firms on pro bono, giving and related issues involving access to justice. The Leadership Circle's Statement of Principles underscores both the integral role that Chicago's law firms have in ensuring equal access to our justice system and the critical importance of solid leadership from the top management of the firms.

Law Firms contribute to a variety of good causes, so why is the Law Firm Leadership Circle limited to Access to Justice issues?

Just as corporations in other sectors of business focus their charitable efforts on issues uniquely important to them (e.g., Kraft on helping fight hunger, Abbott on fighting deadly diseases that plague the poor, Microsoft on making technology available to underserved communities, etc.), the Leadership Circle reflects the unique importance of equal access to justice to the legal community. While we all are asked to support a number of worthy causes throughout the year, the justice system is our "home turf" as lawyers, and law firms have the responsibility and power to make a real difference in our community.

Why is the Law Firm Leadership Circle needed?

A dedicated group of pro bono and legal aid attorneys in Chicago provide vital legal services to many thousands of the most vulnerable residents in our community. However, due to a long-term underinvestment in our pro bono and legal aid system, tens of thousands of less fortunate individuals continue to lack access to legal assistance that is often critical to their safety and independence. Hundreds of thousands more are forced to try to solve often complex legal problems on their own.

As lawyers and guardians of the justice system, the huge gap in access to justice in our community today is simply unacceptable. The Law Firm Leadership Circle underscores the commitment of Chicago's law firms to reverse this trend.

Why is The Chicago Bar Foundation the umbrella organization for the Law Firm Leadership Circle?

As the charitable arm of The Chicago Bar Association, The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) is the ideal place for Chicago's law firms to come together as one around the cause of ensuring that everyone in our community has access to justice. With the support of more than one hundred law firms and corporations and thousands of individual donors, the CBF takes a comprehensive approach to improving access to justice in our community by:

- Building the capacity of the pro bono and legal aid system serving the Chicago area;
- Making it possible for dedicated lawyers to pursue careers in legal aid; and
- Spearheading initiatives that are critical to eliminating systemic barriers to equal access to justice.

The Law Firm Leadership Circle's Statement of Principles exemplifies the CBF's comprehensive approach to addressing these issues.

Is the Law Firm Leadership Circle just for large law firms?

No. The Law Firm Leadership Circle and accompanying Statement of Principles are specifically designed for firms of all sizes. The core pledges in the Statement of Principles are flexible standards that are designed for firms of any size.

Our firm also has offices in other parts of the country and world. Does this Statement of Principles apply to those offices too?

The Statement of Principles only applies to the firm's Chicago office. Regardless of where a firm is based or where else the firm may have offices, the firm's Chicago office is an important part of our City's legal community and shares the same interest in ensuring a strong pro bono and legal aid system here. We believe this statement of principles is consistent with best practices elsewhere in the country and could be adopted in other offices at the firm's option. But the Statement of Principles was designed so that it can easily be implemented here in Chicago even if a different standard is adopted for other offices of the firm.

How were the individual commitments in the Statement of Principles chosen as the guiding principles for the Law Firm Leadership Circle?

The Statement of Principles, developed by the CBF's Managing Partners Advisory Committee, recognize that fulfilling our special professional responsibility to ensure equal access to our justice system requires contributions of time and money as well as a strategic use of the influence we have in our community as lawyers and law firms. We believe this may be the first time that a truly comprehensive statement of principles has been developed to recognize the unique role that law firms play in ensuring access to justice. However, each of the individual commitments in the Statement of Principles embodies best practices on these issues that previously have been acknowledged either in Chicago or other parts of the country.

Our firm already has signed a statement of principles for pro bono work. Why isn't our commitment to pro bono enough?

A firm's commitment to pro bono work by its lawyers is clearly one of its most important contributions to ensuring equal access to justice. But it would be virtually impossible for any firm to have an effective pro bono program without partnering with one or more of the many outstanding legal aid organizations serving the Chicago area, and there are many ways that law firms can and should support the critical work of these organizations. This Statement of Principles builds on the commitment that many law firms and corporations previously made through the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) "Statement of Principles Regarding Pro Bono Legal Services" adopted in 2002. PILI and the CBF are now partners in the Pro Bono Initiative (PBI).

Why is support for legal aid agencies necessary for good law firm pro bono programs?

Firms need good legal aid organizations as partners in order to ensure effective pro bono programs, and investing in their work by providing the firm's financial backing and other support is a necessary complement to good internal pro bono policies. Legal aid organizations provide the necessary "infrastructure" to support pro bono work for area lawyers and law firms (i.e., pro bono programs with solid screening, referral, training and support functions for volunteers). Legal aid programs also provide critical legal assistance to the most vulnerable members of our community in matters where pro bono is not a practical solution.

How were the minimum thresholds for core law firm financial support determined?

There are a number of standards that have been adopted for support of legal aid organizations in other cities. The minimum firm support amount (\$300 per attorney) is based on the Philadelphia Bar Association's successful "Raising the Bar" Campaign. In Philadelphia, 133 firms signed onto this Campaign last year, with many giving at higher levels--see www.philadelphiabar.org for more information. Other cities have adopted higher standards. For example, in San Francisco, a percentage of firm revenues is being used as the target for giving, while in New York a special campaign through the Legal Aid Society sets the minimum standard for law firms at \$600 per attorney.

Rather than adopt these higher amounts as a minimum threshold for the Leadership Circle, the Statement of Principles have adopted the Gold (\$600 per attorney) and Platinum (\$1,000 per attorney) standards as aspirational targets for law firms in the Leadership Circle.

Why don't we get credit for other kinds of law firm giving and community service?

While we recognize that lawyers and law firms support a variety of charitable initiatives, as a profession lawyers have a special responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to our justice system. The Leadership Circle and Statement of Principles focus on access to justice issues for that fundamental reason.

Why don't firms get credit for financial contributions of individual attorneys, especially partners?

The preamble to the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct underscores that both individual lawyers and law firms have a responsibility to help ensure access to justice. The Chicago Bar Association already has adopted a resolution for individual lawyers (see www.chicagobarfoundation.org for more information). The Leadership Circle and Statement of Principles are specifically targeted towards law firms.

It is widely recognized today that having a good pro bono program is good business for a law firm and an essential part of the firm's long-term success. The firm's pro bono program generates important benefits for the firm in recruiting, training and retaining the best and brightest young lawyers and can yield significant marketing and public relations benefits for the firm as well. As noted above, the firm's financial support for local legal aid organizations is an integral part of the firm's pro bono program, as these organizations provide the infrastructure and support that are critical to successful law firm pro bono programs.

Why are the firm's matching contributions to the CBF *Investing in Justice Campaign* treated separately?

The CBF's annual *Investing in Justice Campaign* is a communitywide fundraising campaign through which thousands of individual lawyers at Chicago law firms and corporations come together to build the capacity of our pro bono and legal aid system. 100% of the proceeds from the *Campaign* go directly for CBF grants that advance this purpose.

Because the *Campaign* is geared towards individual lawyers and is intended to raise funds above and beyond what law firms already are giving to the cause, firm matching contributions for the *Campaign* are treated separately from the firm's core contributions to our community's legal aid organizations and to the CBF. Matching contributions underscore the firm's commitment to the Campaign and are a proven incentive for increasing individual giving; even a partial match from the firm has been shown to increase individual contributions, and that impact increases as the amount of the match increases.

What about other contributions to The Chicago Bar Foundation?

Other contributions to the CBF for the annual CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards Luncheon and other CBF events can be counted as core contributions for purposes of the Statement of Principles. These contributions support the CBF's broader efforts to ensure access to justice, which along with grants include championing pro bono work and related access to justice initiatives in the legal community; advocating for sufficient government funding for legal aid and promoting broader community support; helping dedicated attorneys pursue careers in legal aid; working with the courts to make the justice system more user-friendly and accessible; and advancing best practices in the legal aid community on issues like management, governance and coordination with other providers. More information on the CBF's comprehensive access to justice efforts is available at www.chicagobarfoundation.org.

How does the CBF determine the organizations that can be considered as qualifying donations for the Statement of Principles?

The organizations on the list all have been carefully vetted by the CBF through its organizational support grant process, an objective and thorough screening process that confirms these organizations are good investments in our legal aid system. This list will be periodically updated, and more information on the CBF's grant process is available at www.chicagobarfoundation.org. As discussed further in the background materials for the Statement of Principles, contributions to other organizations that promote access to justice for vulnerable Chicagoans can be considered in determining whether a firm meets the Gold or Platinum standards for the Leadership Circle.

Since the Leadership Circle is new and we weren't formally tracking all of these things in the past, how will you determine whether we are eligible?

Because it is new, so long as the firm is willing to commit to the Statement of Principles for its Fiscal Year 2008, the firm will be included in the Leadership Circle. If the firm makes the commitments that would qualify it for Gold or Platinum status in the Leadership Circle, that will be noted as well.

How will a firm's participation be tracked going forward?

Firms will confidentially report to the CBF at a designated time each year on the firm's progress with the Statement of Principles in the previous year. That report should include a statement that the firm remains committed to each of the standards in the Statement of Principles along with a summary of the

firm's financial contributions for that year. The CBF has prepared a user-friendly spreadsheet for a firm to track its qualifying financial contributions.

Will the firm's reporting of financial contributions be made public?

No. All individual reporting by participating law firms will remain confidential. The only information that will be publicly reported will be whether a firm meets the criteria for the Leadership Circle, and if so, whether the firm meets the Gold or Platinum standards.

Will you track the firm's pro bono hours too?

We are only asking for a good-faith commitment to the aspirational targets included in the pro bono portion of these standards. We recognize that other entities (e.g., Pro Bono Institute, American Lawyer) may ask for this information, but the CBF will not ask firms to report on their actual pro bono hours.

When will the Law Firm Leadership Circle be publicly rolled out?

Our goal is to have the initial public roll out of the Law Firm Leadership Circle and its founding members in late 2007 or early 2008.

Is there a deadline for participation?

There is no formal deadline, but to be considered as a founding member of the Leadership Circle, firms should commit to the Statement of Principles by December 1, 2007. Firms can make the commitment and become members of the Leadership Circle at any time though.

What kind of recognition will firms receive for being members of the Law Firm Leadership Circle?

In addition to recognition at CBF events, in CBA and CBF publications and on the CBF website, we anticipate members of the Law Firm Leadership Circle will be recognized in the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Chicago Lawyer and Crain's Chicago Business. There may additional recognition in American Lawyer, the National Law Journal, the Chicago Tribune and/or the Chicago Sun-Times. Members also will receive featured recognition at the annual Pro Bono Initiative event in June.

Who do we contact if we have questions?

You can contact Bob Deignan, Chair of the CBF Managing Partners Committee, at (312) 861-2860 or robert.e.deignan@bakernet.com, or Bob Glaves, Executive Director of the CBF, at (312) 554-1205 or bglaves@chicagobar.org.