

Section of Litigation Annual Conference

WASHINGTON, D.C. — APRIL 17, 2008

“International Pro Bono Opportunities: Where Lawyers are needed Beyond our Borders”

*Roundtable discussion of the International Litigation Committee
Section of Litigation, American Bar Association*

A very promising and successful breakfast discussion was held by the International Litigation Committee during the annual meeting of the Litigation Section of the ABA in Washington, D.C. A number of committee members provided updates on their international pro bono activities, and we thank everyone for their contributions. A special thanks goes to our two main speakers, Montserrat Miller (Greenberg Traurig LLP, Washington, D.C.) and David Roll (Steptoe & Johnson LLP, Washington, D.C.).

Montserrat Miller is the Co-chair of the Immigration Litigation Committee of the ABA Litigation Section. She provided an update on the ABA Immigration Justice Project (“IJP”) and specifically pro bono opportunities for providing representation for both detained and non-detained immigrants in the United States. The project is currently based in San Diego but has plans to expand and has a need for the participation of more junior attorneys. Training and mentoring will be provided and there is a great deal of work to do at both the immigration court and appellate levels.

David Roll is the Chair of the Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation, a foundation dedicated to providing pro bono legal assistance to “social entrepreneurs” through Lex Mundi, a leading association of independent law firms comprising 160 business law firms and 20,000 lawyers worldwide. The Foundation focuses on initiatives that use entrepreneurial approaches to solve global social problems, often by working first at a very local and direct level. David provided examples of house construction projects in Indonesia and eyeglass manufacturing in India as two of the projects supported by the Foundation. Approximately 275 projects have been initiated to date, and there is a great need for contribution from more lawyers and law firms, particularly in the corporate area. Many of these projects and collaborating agencies are listed at the Foundation’s website at www.lexmundiprobono.org. For lawyers interested in contributing in a litigation-oriented pro bono area, David recommended contacting the Foundation collaborator Ashoka Advocates for Social Entrepreneurs (Arlington, Virginia) or the Global Fund for Children (Washington, D.C.).

Jerry Roth (Munger Tolles & Olson LLP, San Francisco) is Co-chair of the International Litigation Committee. Jerry spoke about opportunities to participate in the Darfur training program which prepares Sudanese lawyers to represent victims of genocide before the International Criminal Court. The Darfur training program needs both criminal and civil litigators to assist in establishing programs and providing training. Jerry spoke highly of the positive impact that an ABA presence can provide to programs in a region such as Darfur simply

by being involved. At the same time, he said that ABA participants stand to gain and learn a great deal from the experience.

Barb Dawson (Snell & Wilmer LLP, Phoenix) is Co-chair of the International Litigation Committee. Barb spoke about pro bono opportunities in a variety of areas, including negotiation and mediation training in South Africa, law drafting, client service and advocacy and assisting organizations with obtaining 501(c)(3) funding.

Louis Burke (Louis F. Burke PC, New York) is Co-chair of the International Litigation Committee. Louis observed that a wide number of agencies were mentioned during the breakfast roundtable and recommended that consideration be given to establishing a clearing house for pro bono opportunities, likely in collaboration with other committees or organizations also active in the area such as the ABA Human Rights Centre, the ABA Pro Bono and Public Interest Committee, the Pro Bono Institute (Georgetown University) or the Association of Pro Bono Counsel.

Bob Friese (Shartsis Friese LLP, San Francisco) discussed opportunities for pro bono projects through the Worldwatch Institute, an independent research organization dedicated to creating an environmentally sustainable society. More information can be found on the Worldwatch Institute at its website: www.worldwatch.org.

Brad Berg (Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP, Toronto) is the new Chair of the Pro Bono Subcommittee of the International Litigation Committee. Brad discussed community development opportunities on a pro bono basis, such as training and governance assistance provided through Dignitas International for HIV/AIDS treatment and care in Malawi. While pro bono litigation opportunities remain strong in Canada, Brad observed that corporate and other non-litigation pro bono opportunities are growing rapidly.

If anyone has ideas about how to develop and expand this discussion or if others wish to join the Pro Bono Subcommittee, please contact Brad Berg.