FILED
11 SEP 28 AM 11:07
BY RONALD R. CARPENTER
CLERK

THE SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER OF THE CELEBRATION OF PRO BONO WEEK OCTOBER 23-29, 2011	)))))	NO. 25700-B-518 PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, equal justice is a cornerstone of our democracy; and

WHEREAS, our justice system is dedicated to the proposition that all members of society should have meaningful access to the justice system, and the corresponding capacity to know of, understand, assert and defend important legal rights and prerogatives within that system; and

WHEREAS, our state's civil legal aid system is a model public-private partnership dedicated to delivering on the promise of "equal justice under law" for low- and moderate-income people with civil legal problems that affect the most important rights and basic needs; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of the ongoing economic downturn, the increase in unemployment, the foreclosure crisis, and the impact of deep reductions in governmental support for essential services, more and more individuals and families are experiencing critical civil legal problems and lack the resources to retain necessary legal assistance; and

WHEREAS, the timely provision of civil legal aid can help alleviate some of the harshest effects of the economic downturn and prevent a costly spiral of social problems, and that timely access to an attorney can mean the difference between shelter and homelessness, food on the table and hunger, economic stability and bankruptcy, productive work and unemployment; and

WHEREAS, staffed civil legal aid programs in Washington State have experienced significant funding and staffing cuts, are being deluged with unprecedented levels of client demand, and are increasingly unable to serve those who face the most dire of life and related civil legal problems; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, more than 5,000 public and private attorneys working in association with local volunteer attorney programs provided more than 75,000 hours of volunteer attorney assistance on behalf of more than 20,000 low-income individuals, with a value in excess of $13 million; and

621/92

WHEREAS, consistent with the role attorneys play as stewards of our justice system, the Rules of Professional Conduct set forth the expectation that all attorneys licensed in Washington provide at least 30 hours of volunteer legal services to persons of limited means who are unable to retain counsel on their own; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance for Equal Justice, in partnership with the Washington Supreme Court, the Access to Justice Board, the Washington State Bar Association, WSBA's Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee, the corporate counsel community and many others, is working to expand the level of volunteer involvement in the provision of critically needed civil legal aid services; and

WHEREAS, during the week of October 23-29, 2011, leaders of national, state and local bar associations, our justice system, and of business, corporate and governmental entities will join together to celebrate pro bono efforts statewide and encourage expanded volunteer engagement in the effort to meet the critical civil justice needs of low- and moderate-income people;

NOW THEREFORE, the Supreme Court of the State of Washington recognizes the week of October 23-29, 2011 as Washington State Celebration of Pro Bono Week to honor the work of those who provide volunteer legal services, to increase awareness of the growing need for civil legal help on matters of profound urgency, and as a reminder to all attorneys of their professional responsibility to assist in ensuring our nation's, our state's and our profession's commitment to equal justice under law.

DATED at Olympia, Washington this 28th day of September, 2011.

Madsen, C.J.

Alexander, J.

Fairhurst, J.

Chambers, J.

Stephens, J.

Owens, J.

Wiggins, J.