Letter to the Editor

We grew up thinking of America as the wealthiest country on earth, but the truth is that one-third of the residents in Illinois lives below the federal poverty level, some unable to pay for the basic necessities of life—food, shelter, and clothing.

We have created programs to provide those basic needs to our poorer neighbors, but too often, those of limited means lose out on programs and everyday justice because they do not have lawyers to help. National estimates say that 80% of the legal needs of the poor may be unmet.

The pro bono assistance of lawyers is often the only thing standing between the poor and hunger, homelessness, violence and abuse. In 2015, some 31,362 Illinois lawyers reported that they had provided pro bono legal services. They gave more than 2,055,987 hours’ worth of free legal services. Illinois lawyers also donated $14,802,544 in monetary contributions to pro bono legal services organizations. In addition, beginning with the 2013 registration year, every Illinois lawyer paid $95 in their registration fee that goes to fund legal services.

In order to educate everyone about the good these volunteers in Illinois’ legal community do, and to recruit more attorneys and paralegals to meet these needs, the week of October 23 through 29, 2016, has been designated National Pro Bono Week. During that week, we would like you to join us in recognizing the selfless people who have been providing free legal assistance to all those who need help. They are the strands in the safety net protecting our neighbors who are in the greatest need of help.

(Any other specifics the author or organization wants to publicize—local numbers of volunteers, events, etc.)

Signed by group leader