



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Record Pro Bono Services from Law Firms Despite Economic Recession, \$2 Billion in Free Legal Services in 2009

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. –** The pro bono efforts of major law firms held steady in 2009 despite the continued pressures of the economic downturn, according to the **Pro Bono Institute's 2009 Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® Report** released today.

In 2009, 134 of the nation's law firms performed 4,867,820 hours of pro bono work, an increase of nearly 24,000 hours from 2008. The total translates to nearly \$2 billion in free legal services, or the equivalent of 3,100 full time lawyers – almost the same as the number of full time salaried legal services attorneys in the U.S.

"We were hoping to just hold our own on pro bono contributions this year, but to see growth like this is astounding," Pro Bono Institute President and CEO Esther F. Lardent said. "The Challenge firms are truly embracing the idea of providing access to justice, particularly now when people need help most."

The increase occurred despite economic pressures, declining revenues, and a decrease in the number of participating attorneys – some of whom were among the more than 5,600 lawyers laid off at large firms last year. There was also a marked increase in the number of participating partners, with 19,934 participating in 2009 compared to 19,111 in 2008.

Charitable giving to nonprofit groups that provide free legal services to persons of limited means was also up among firms. Sixty-six firms reported that in 2009 they donated \$27,609,877 to legal services organizations, up \$1,991,205 from 2008.

While there was a slight decrease in the number of individuals served, hours for nonprofit organizations went up. Pro bono firms offer services to individuals and nonprofit community groups as part of the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge®.

The full report is available here:

<http://www.probonoinst.org/pdfs/2009%20Challenge%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf>

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*PBI will host a **MEDIA ONLY** conference call with Esther Lardent today, June 15, at 2:00 p.m. Reporters may call in at 866-244-8528 and enter code: 709776#.*

**The Law Firm Pro Bono Project®** is the only global effort designed to support and enhance the pro bono culture and performance of major law firms. The Project's goal is to fully integrate

pro bono into the practice, philosophy, and culture of firms. The Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® is a unique, aspirational pro bono standard that includes a narrow but thoughtful definition of pro bono, as well as an accountability mechanism and measurement tool through its performance benchmarks and annual reporting requirement.

**About the Pro Bono Institute**

Established in 1996, PBI is a nonprofit organization with a mandate to explore and identify new approaches to the poor and disadvantaged unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems. PBI identifies and develops innovative programs and undertakes rigorous evaluations to ensure that these new approaches are workable and effective.

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