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Maryland lawyers donate more than 1 million hours of legal service to help state's underserved

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Maryland lawyers donated approximately 1,150,205 hours of volunteer or pro bono legal services to help the state's indigent population, according to the [Current Status of Pro Bono Service Among Maryland Lawyers, 2016](#) report. The report was recently submitted to the Maryland Court of Appeals by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Approximately 53 percent of the lawyers practicing full-time in the state helped people of limited means and other vulnerable populations with free or substantially reduced-fee legal services. Maryland boasts one of the highest rates of pro bono activity in the country, according to the American Bar Association Center of Pro Bono.

The 2016 report reflects a comprehensive poll of Maryland's 39,800 lawyers, who have been required since 2002 to report their pro bono legal service hours to the state's highest court on an annual basis. The majority of those doing free legal work dedicated from 10 to more than 50 hours. The polling also revealed the longer attorneys were in practice, the more likely they were to engage in volunteering. Solo practitioners and small firm members tended to offer their time and skills more frequently than those in large and midsize firms. Services included rendering legal help directly to people of limited means, assisting organizations serving the same population, giving organizational help to nonprofits, and working with entities on civil rights matters. Overall, those in the more rural parts of the state, such as Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore, reported the highest percentage of pro bono involvement.

The report demonstrates lawyers actively volunteer and financially support legal services in their local communities. However, it also reveals challenges, as the types of law many attorneys practice do not necessarily correlate to the areas of greatest legal need, namely family law, consumer law, housing law and public benefits.

To make volunteer opportunities more accessible for lawyers, the Judiciary's Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Service works with the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland (PBRC), the pro bono arm of the Maryland State Bar Association, and other legal services programs to ensure training, mentoring, malpractice insurance, and service-learning opportunities are available on a local level. Lawyers who want more information on getting involved in pro bono work can contact PBRC at www.probonomd.org or aspedie@probonomd.org.

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