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About the Senior Lawyer Public Interest Project

The Senior Lawyer Public Interest Project is a public service initiative of the [D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program](#) to encourage and facilitate experienced senior lawyers to contribute their time and expertise either to nonprofit legal service providers in D.C. or to provide pro bono legal services directly to clients in need.

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How to Get Started

Have you ever thought of dedicating your time to public service work? Some ways in which you can start include:

- Approaching your firm for a work arrangement.
- Finding an organization or cause that appeals to you.
- Working with an existing organization to develop a new, meaningful project.
- Developing a project or projects on your own.

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Approaching Your Firm

In an informal survey conducted by the Senior Lawyer Project, leading law firms in the District were overwhelmingly favorable to having ad hoc arrangements with senior lawyers that would allow them to devote all or a significant portion of their time to public interest work. In fact many firms already have special arrangements with senior lawyers who have decided to work part time.

In most cases, you should be able to reach an agreement with your firm that will allow you to pursue your interest in pro bono work. Before approaching your firm, consider some key points:

- Compensation: How will your compensation be affected if you undertake a significant amount of public interest

- legal work?
- Client workload: What expectation does the firm have of you with respect to client chargeable hours and maintaining client relationships?
 - Use of office, computer equipment, and staff: Will the firm continue to provide administrative support and services?
 - Health insurance and other benefits: Can you continue to participate in health, life, and disability insurance programs, and, if so, will it require payment changes?
 - Participation in retirement plans: Can you continue to participate in the firm's retirement plans (funded and unfunded) and what will the tax impacts (if any) of such participation be?
 - Malpractice insurance: Will you continue to be covered by the firm's malpractice insurance policy?
 - Status: Will you retain your position as a partner and be able to participate in firm activities, such as attending partner meetings and voting on partnership matters?
 - Pro Bono Program: Will you be able to work with the firm's pro bono program to secure associate and paralegal assistance on your public interest legal work?

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Projects at Local Organizations

You may want to offer your services to local nonprofit legal service providers by contacting them directly. Our topically indexed [directory of legal assistance programs](#) can help you figure out which organizations are doing the type of work that most interests you.

The following nonprofit legal services organizations have indicated interest in creating special volunteer positions and projects for senior lawyers who would like to use their legal expertise to promote the public good.

AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE)

[Legal Counsel for the Elderly \(LCE\)](#), an affiliate of AARP, has, since its inception in 1975, pioneered the use of senior attorney volunteers throughout its work. LCE is the primary provider of legal services to low and moderate income older people in the District of Columbia. In-house senior attorneys, working along side staff attorneys, handle a large array of civil legal matters from the simple to the complex, and also engage in activities such as community education and outreach, client interviewing, document drafting, and legal research. LCE utilizes a legal advice line, a brief services unit, a staff attorney program, and a pro bono project to deliver legal services to low and moderate income older people.

History and Background: LCE opened its doors in 1975 with a cadre of senior volunteer attorneys and has utilized this model of service delivery ever since. LCE's office orientation is geared toward accommodating volunteers especially volunteer attorneys. LCE has a large number of publications for back-up support as well as an experienced attorney staff who provide assistance, supervision and co-counseling. LCE, together with the ABA Commission on Law and Aging, wrote the first resource manual for senior attorney volunteers (1994) for nationwide use, the second edition of which will be published shortly. LCE's Director serves on the ABA's Second Season of Service Commission, an organized nationwide effort to

encourage volunteer efforts by senior attorneys.

Substantive areas: LCE handles cases in most civil legal areas with an emphasis on protective services (e.g., guardianships), housing (e.g., landlord/tenant), consumer (e.g., predatory lending, home repair fraud), public benefits (e.g., social security), and wills and probate. LCE is also the Long-term care ombudsman for the District of Columbia and utilizes volunteers in a variety of legal matters in this area as well.

Volunteer opportunities: LCE provides multiple opportunities for senior attorneys. Every effort is made to match the experience, qualifications and interest of the attorneys to the most suitable LCE project. For more information, contact [Shirley Williams](#), LCE Volunteer Lawyers Project Administrator, 202-434-2129.

Ayuda, Inc.

[Ayuda, Inc.](#) is seeking pro bono attorneys to represent unaccompanied immigrant children through its **Children's Project**. Ayuda, Inc. exists to advocate for and defend the legal and human rights of low-income Latino and other immigrant communities in the Washington, D.C. area. The Children's Project of Ayuda, Inc. is the only local organization that systematically provides immigration legal advice, consultation, and representation to unaccompanied immigrant children, and which conducts outreach and advocacy on their behalf. Due to their vulnerable status, many of these children are entitled to apply for immigration benefits such as asylum, special immigrant juvenile status, VAWA, and U-Visas. Although Ayuda served over 50 unaccompanied children in 2005, the demand for services far exceeds our current capacity. Thus, Ayuda, Inc. seeks volunteers to assist in providing legal advice and representation in cases before D.C., Maryland, and Virginia family courts, as well as area immigration courts. To volunteer to represent an unaccompanied immigrant child or obtain additional information, please contact Christina Wilkes at cwilkes@ayudainc.org or 202-387-4848, ext. 115.

The Children's Law Center

[The Children's Law Center](#) (CLC) is a growing legal services organization that provides high quality representation to individual children and caregivers in neglect, adoption, special education, and related matters. Our talented young lawyers are eager to work with a senior lawyer in order to expand CLC's capacity to include impact litigation. A senior lawyer would play a central role in developing the program and would co-counsel cases with CLC staff attorneys and with lawyers from area law firms. Issues that have come up recently include: (1) a violation of D.C. human rights laws by a group home that required a gay teen foster child to seek counseling from a priest; (2) group and foster homes that punish foster children by refusing to let them visit their parents and siblings in violation of D.C. law; and (3) a challenge to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, or ICPC, a law that keeps neglected children in institutions for months rather than letting them go to grandparents and other relatives, just because the relatives live in Maryland. Senior lawyers interested in working on these issues, or on other issues that affect children and caregivers, should contact [Judith Sandalow](#), executive director, at 202-467-4900, ext. 511.

The D.C. Employment Justice Center

The D.C. Employment Justice Center (EJC) is a private, nonprofit organization with a mission to secure, protect, and promote, workplace justice in the D.C. metropolitan area. We combine legal services, community education, organizing, and advocacy work to achieve justice for low-wage workers. There are a number of important ways that retired, semiretired, about-to-be retired, and senior attorneys can contribute to the EJC. Experience and/or expertise in employment law is, of course, a bonus, but not at all necessary. Most of the issues we deal with for our clients are pretty basic so the learning curve is not steep. And for the more novel issues, employment law is still a subject that is relatively easy to learn, so do not let experience be a barrier!

Our options are many and varied:

1. Take on a pro bono case or mentor associates who take on wage and hour cases, workers' compensation cases, and any other type of matter they find interesting. You could even supervise a specialty practice within your firm. We see about a dozen cases of unpaid wages each week and these are incredibly important, but also very discrete matters. A firm that specializes in these cases could literally recover hundreds of thousands of dollars for low-income workers each year.
2. Write or supervise the writing of appellate briefs or amicus briefs. They can be briefs on well-settled matters, or ones that work to expand the law and employment protections for workers.
3. Experienced employment attorneys, and those who are willing to learn employment law, could help staff our weekly Workers' Rights Clinics.

We're also open to discussion with interested attorneys to explore other options. If you are interested, please contact Judy Conti at jconti@dcejc.org.

Lawyers for Children America

The thousands of children and adolescents with abuse and neglect cases in the District of Columbia Family Court need zealous advocates to make sure that they receive necessary services—e.g., medical care, mental health treatment, and educational assistance—and to ensure that they are placed in permanent homes as soon as possible. **Lawyers for Children America (LFCA)** helps meet this need by recruiting, training, and supporting pro bono attorneys for abused and neglected children. LFCA's relationship with a pro bono attorney begins when the attorney attends an initial training. An LFCA program director with expertise in child welfare law accompanies the pro bono attorney to the first court hearing in his or her case and to subsequent hearings as necessary. Throughout the pro bono attorney's case, LFCA provides technical legal assistance; information about community resources for children and families; a newsletter to keep pro bono attorneys abreast of developments in the this area of practice; continuing education opportunities; and sample pleadings. By establishing a relationship with the child client and gathering information from foster parents, doctors, counselors, teachers, and relatives, the pro bono attorney identifies the child's medical, psychological, educational, and legal needs. This allows the pro bono attorney to ensure, through advocacy in court and within various child-serving agencies, that the child's needs are met.

There are a variety of ways for senior lawyers to support

LFCA's work on behalf of abused and neglected children. LFCA invites senior lawyers to offer pro bono legal services to children in abuse and neglect cases; to assist LFCA staff in developing educational resources for child welfare attorneys; to create LFCA "practice groups" at law firms; to share litigation expertise (e.g., trial skills) with the LFCA volunteer corps; and to work on other special projects. Interested attorneys should contact [Angela Jacobs](#) at 202-339-8943.

The Landlord Tenant Resource Center

The [Landlord Tenant Resource Center](#) (LTRC) provides legal information and assistance to residential pro se litigants—both landlords and tenants—in landlord and tenant matters in the District of Columbia. Each year, landlords file over 45,000 cases in the Landlord and Tenant Branch of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia seeking summary eviction of tenants. Most cases allege nonpayment of rent as the reason for the action. Over 99 percent of the tenants sued in landlord and tenant court are not represented by counsel, and nearly 14 percent of landlords are not represented. Regardless of the facts and merits of their cases, unrepresented tenants face a high risk of having judgments entered against them, while inexperienced pro se landlords risk having their cases dismissed, often because of procedural missteps. The services provided by the LTRC include helping pro se litigants understand court proceedings and their options, and assisting litigants with completing pro se pleadings. Currently, the center is staffed on a rotating basis by nine major law firms. The volunteer lawyers and legal assistants have varying degrees of expertise with housing matters. Although a D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program staff attorney is onsite during center hours, the services of a senior lawyer are greatly needed to provide consistent mentoring and support of the volunteers, and to help fulfill the ever-expanding needs of pro se litigants in landlord and tenant court (e.g., drafting additional pro se pleadings, preparing informational brochures, etc.). The center is open every day the Court is in session from 9:15 a.m. until about 1 p.m. For more information, contact [Mark Herzog](#), assistant director of the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program, at 202-737-4700, ext. 206.

The Legal Aid Society of D.C.

[The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia](#) was formed in 1932 to "provide legal aid and counsel to indigent persons in civil law matters and to encourage measures by which the law may better protect and serve their needs." Legal Aid is interested in exploring opportunities for senior lawyers to help maximize our resources in the following ways:

Casehandling: Senior lawyers could assist Legal Aid in increasing the number of clients we are able to serve in-house by taking on a limited caseload, working side by side with a Legal Aid attorney in one of our three substantive areas: housing, family law, or public benefits. Opportunities may also be available for senior lawyers to work on appellate cases through our Appellate Advocacy Project.

Intake: Legal Aid is open for intake in their Northwest location three days a week and is working to expand intake at the other sites in the community. People seeking representation walk in without an appointment and meet with an attorney on a first-come, first-served basis. Senior lawyers who could commit to conducting intake on a regular basis would provide a significant service to our client community and free up staff attorneys' time to work on their individual casework and systemic advocacy projects.

Systemic Advocacy/Public Policy Work: Legal Aid undertakes systemic advocacy and public policy projects that

support our individual casework in the areas of housing, family law, and public benefits. Opportunities may be available for senior lawyers to work on these projects.

Pro Bono Mentoring: Legal Aid's Pro Bono Program connects volunteer attorneys with individuals and families in need of legal representation, but for whom they do not have enough resources to serve in-house. Senior lawyers could play an important role in helping to mentor volunteer attorneys who accept pro bono cases referred by Legal Aid.

Language Access: Legal Aid is particularly committed to serving immigrant individuals and families facing special challenges because of language barriers. Senior lawyers who speak Spanish or other languages could enhance their ability to serve these client communities.

Senior lawyers interested in learning more about opportunities with the Legal Aid Society should contact **Jodi Feldman**, director of Pro Bono and Intake Programs, at 202-661-5965.

University Legal Services

University Legal Services (ULS) is the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agency for the District of Columbia. Each state and territory has a designated P&A whose purpose is to pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies to ensure the protection of the rights of people with disabilities. Congress mandated the creation of the P&A system given the shocking conditions under which people with disabilities were surviving. As the P&A, ULS has the authority to investigate incidents of abuse and neglect, seclusion and restraint, and has sweeping access to both private and public facilities in which people with disabilities live or receive services, and to the records of those seeking our services.

ULS handles matters related to the care and treatment of people with mental retardation, and other developmental disabilities, to issues of concern to people with mental illness, children with disabilities seeking to fulfill their educational goals, accessible housing, employment, voter's rights, and to those who have sustained a traumatic brain injury.

ULS seeks volunteers (preferably attorneys who still have a relationship with their law firm) who can provide legal representation to our clients, devote time to class action litigation, and assist with costs associated with such. For further information, please contact **Jane Brown** at 202-547-0198.

Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs is a private nonprofit organization with a mission to provide pro bono legal services and assistance, using the resources of volunteer lawyers and law firms, to address discrimination and poverty in the Washington, D.C., region. The Committee's staff coordinates these activities in six project areas: equal employment opportunity, public accommodations, fair housing, public education, immigrant and refugee rights, and disability rights.

The committee established its first senior lawyer position with an experienced attorney on staff in 1993. Currently, the committee employs several senior lawyers with the equal employment opportunity, fair housing, and public accommodations projects. All but one of the senior lawyers

work onsite at the committee's offices. The committee is considering additional options for employing senior lawyers offsite, including senior lawyers who can work with the committee while remaining resident at their law firm offices. For more information, contact **Rod Boggs**, executive director, at 202-319-1000.

Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless

The Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless was founded in 1986 to overcome the barriers that prevent people struggling with homelessness from accessing the community's traditional legal service programs. Our mission is to use law and advocacy to end the unnecessary suffering caused by poverty and homelessness and advocate for justice for people in the District of Columbia who are homeless or at risk of becoming so.

Although we often have discrete litigation or policy projects that could benefit from the assistance of a senior lawyer, ongoing projects include:

Site Adoption Program: Senior lawyers can be a valuable resource by organizing their firm to adopt one of our nine intake sites in the District. Our intake sites are located at local shelters, day programs, and soup kitchens. Senior lawyers can assist in this program by recruiting and coordinating attorneys and paralegals from their firm to staff one of these sites on a regular schedule to assist homeless or low-income clients in overcoming their legal obstacles. Legal Clinic staff would provide training.

Summer Associate Program: Senior lawyers can participate in our Summer Associate Program where summer associates from local law firms receive training by the Legal Clinic and take on client cases through our intake program. Senior lawyers would supervise their firms' summer associates as well as give their experienced guidance throughout the process.

Senior Lawyers interested in working with the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless on these or other issues can contact our coordinator of volunteers, Laura Markle at 202-328-5254 or laura@legalclinc.org.

Whitman-Walker Clinic Legal Services Program

Since 1986, the **Whitman-Walker Clinic Legal Services Program (WWCLSP)** has provided pro bono legal advice and representation to thousands of persons living with HIV/AIDS throughout the Washington metropolitan area. We are an eight-person legal services office in a larger medical, behavioral, and social services agency serving people with HIV/AIDS, and the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community, in the Washington metropolitan area. Staff lawyers handle a variety of cases in-house; investigate and conduct preliminary assessments of new cases; and work closely with more than 150 pro bono volunteer attorneys and paralegals. Our primary areas of practice are: Social Security disability, Medicaid, Medicare, and other federal, state, and local public benefits programs; employment, public accommodations and housing discrimination; health, disability, and life insurance; immigration; wills, powers of attorney, and advance health care directives; medical confidentiality; and certain debt issues. Our principal mission is to serve persons living with HIV/AIDS regardless of sexual orientation or gender, but we also provide some services to HIV-negative clients in the following areas: relief under the immigration laws for foreign nationals facing persecution in their countries of

origin because of sexual orientation or gender identity or presentation; discrimination based on transgender status or sexual orientation; wills, powers of attorney, and advance health care directives for lower-income GLBT individuals and couples; and health insurance and disability-related issues faced by HIV-negative clients of Whitman-Walker Clinic who also have other serious health problems.

Senior lawyers could greatly enhance our program by committing to conduct intake of new clients on a regular basis, and performing follow-up investigation and preliminary analysis of new cases; handling a limited caseload in one or more of our practice areas; working with senior staff attorneys on specific public policy/advocacy projects; and/or serving as mentors to volunteers in one or more of our practice areas. Senior lawyers who are proficient in Spanish or other languages could also provide valuable services to our clients facing language barriers.

Senior lawyers interested in learning more about opportunities with WWCLSP should contact [Daniel Bruner](#), director of Legal Services, at 202-939-7627.

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Developing Your Own Project

Some lawyers may prefer the flexibility and freedom of doing pro bono projects on their own, outside the structure of a particular legal service provider. In such cases the possibilities are infinite. If this approach appeals to you, you may still need to have some contact with organizations that provide legal services in your areas of interest. Such organizations, for example, are sometimes a good source for challenging cases and for training and advice.

Some points to consider when planning your project are:

- What is your objective?
- Do you need additional training in a particular area, legal or nonlegal?
- What organizations and resources are available for guidance and support?
- Do you need help in finding cases or projects in which you can have the greatest impact?
- Would the project you wish to undertake complement the work already being done by one or more nonprofit legal services organizations?

[Search](#) for a legal assistance program that interests you.

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Join the Senior Lawyer Community

Still wondering about how you can transition public service work into your career? Check the [additional resources](#) below, or read about senior lawyer [role models](#) who are open to being contacted by peers with questions about developing a pro bono "second career."

You can also join the Senior Lawyer Public Interest Project [e-mail list](#) (please provide your name, employer, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address) to obtain information about updated resources, emerging pro bono needs, and new pro bono projects being developed by local legal service providers.

Finally, you may contact the Pro Bono Program by calling 202-737-4700, ext. 293.

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Additional Resources

- [The D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program](#)
- www.probono.net/dc
- [Association of the Bar of the City of New York](#)
- [International Senior Lawyers Project](#)
- [American Bar Association Senior Lawyers Division](#)
- [State Bar of California Emeritus Attorney Program](#)

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Role Models

[Read](#) about other attorneys who have undertaken significant public service projects.

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