



A HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW INITIATIVE (PILI)

1977-2011

Since its founding in 1977, the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) has cultivated a lifelong commitment to public interest law by creating opportunities for law students and lawyers to provide public interest and pro bono work in Illinois.

At every stage in the life cycle of a legal career, PILI guides attorneys in actualizing their professional responsibilities and personal commitments to equal access to justice through a continuum of public interest law and pro bono opportunities. PILI's programs first capture emerging lawyers when they are law students and new law school graduates, and then extend into legal practice to reach new associates, seasoned lawyers, and senior attorneys working in every sector of the legal community – private, academic, government and nonprofit.

1977

- "The Chicago Law Student Public Interest Internship Program" is proposed as a pilot program by area law schools, public interest organizations, the Chicago Bar Association, and the Donors Forum to improve law students' awareness of public interest law and lessen the gap in legal services for the poor.
- On a shoestring budget of \$28,000, the program is launched, placing 12 law students as interns, at four public interest agencies with a \$1,000 stipend.

1979

- A year of thoughtful planning, strategizing, and fundraising results in 22 internships at seven public interest agencies.
- Recruiting efforts extend beyond Chicago. Five interns from out-of-state demonstrate the widespread need for public interest experience and foreshadow imminent growth.

1980

- "The Public Interest Law Internship" incorporates separately and establishes its first Board of Directors.
- Ten-week internship stipends are increased to \$2,000 for 30 interns; an Educational Program is added to introduce interns to various aspects of public interest law.
- Within a year, 155 applications for internships are received from 43 law schools nationwide.

1983

- PILI plants seeds for a life-long commitment to pro bono work by initiating a new "Graduate Fellowship Program," placing incoming associates at public interest agencies to gain valuable legal experience and provide much needed legal assistance. Firms underwrite the associated costs.

1989

- A "Supervisors' Workshop" ensures that an exceptional learning experience will be a central part of every internship.
- PILI supports 29 interns and 34 fellows, providing assistance at 20 agencies.
- Twenty-three law firms are participating in the Fellowship Program.
- Affiliated agencies expand to include government agencies working on parallel public interest issues, direct legal services providers, and agencies dedicated to specific substantive areas (i.e., disabilities, immigration, and environment).
- Four other states request information about establishing similar programs.

1993

- Renamed the “Public Interest Law Initiative” two years earlier, PILI successfully broadens its efforts to generate more pro bono work from law firms. Twenty-one firms adopt or revise their pro bono policies, and 43 firms adopt a Statement of Principles, encouraging more pro bono work.
- PILI receives a record 468 applications from 90 law schools nationwide.
- Growth continues with 34 interns, 30 fellows, 31 affiliated agencies, and an annual budget of \$210,535.

1996

- PILI Alumni now number 800.
- A pilot “School-Year Internship Program” is tested to extend the opportunity to more students, and provide agencies with more consistent support throughout the year
- Forty interns receive \$4,000 stipends; law firms absorb the cost of 45 fellows working at public interest agencies for the summer; affiliated agencies number 42.

1999

- A new program, The Pro Bono Initiative for the New Millennium, is undertaken to reinvigorate and formalize PILI’s work in this area. Leaders convene a summit of managing partners from the largest law firms and general counsel from area corporations to guide the new expanded effort.
- PILI’s website is launched at www.pili-law.org
- Ninety-seven interns and fellows participate in PILI programs.

2000

- PILI’s Pro Bono Initiative Implementation Committee, meets for the first time. The Committee establishes three working groups: (1) Pro Bono Programs; (2) Transactional Attorney; and (3) Legal Needs. More than 50 attorneys from law firms, corporate law departments, and foundations sit on the Implementation Committee.
- The Pro Bono Programs Working Group establishes consulting teams that will meet with corporate legal departments and law firms to assist them with launching or revamping a pro bono program. Corporate legal department members of the Implementation Committee meet for the first time to discuss how they can become more involved in pro bono work.
- Each working group presents proposals to the larger Implementation Committee. The proposals include: (1) pairing law firms and corporate law departments to work together on pro bono projects; (2) forming consulting teams to assist corporate law departments and law firms interested in setting up or improving pro bono programs; (3) encouraging law firms and/or corporations to make financial contributions to legal services providers to fund staff positions; and (4) encouraging law firms to adopt rotation programs, under which an associate would be loaned to a designated provider for a finite time period.
- McDonald’s receives the first Pro Bono Initiative Award at PILI’s Annual Awards Luncheon Rita Aliese Fry received the Distinguished Public Service Award.

2001

- Fifty-five summer interns, 13 school-year interns, and sixty fellows combine to make PILI’s 2001 class of 128 the largest in history.
- PILI continues to draw exceptional students from diverse backgrounds (one-third are people of color, and two-thirds are women).
- PILI’s Pro Bono Initiative working groups develop innovative ways to generate more pro bono work: seminars for low-income micro-entrepreneurs, legislative advocacy regarding unaccompanied immigrant children, and guidelines for pro bono work at law departments and law firms.
- PILI helps attorneys in Washington D.C. firms and agencies adopt a fellows program for incoming associates.

2002

- Over 120 people attend a PILI-hosted signing ceremony of the Statements of Principles. Forty-five law firms and 13 corporations are signatories to the Statements.
- Representatives from corporate legal departments begin to meet to share information on launching and continuing successful pro bono programs. Pro bono coordinators from 22 law firms meet for the first time to discuss pro bono work.
- Abbott Laboratories and Baker & McKenzie begin a partnership that launches a naturalization clinic where attorneys and support staff provide legal assistance to people who are completing applications for naturalization.
- Sears, Roebuck & Co. is the recipient of the Pro Bono Initiative Award and Eleanor P. Petersen received the Distinguished Public Service Award.

2003

- PILI celebrates its 25th Anniversary with a year-long series of activities and events.
- One hundred six interns and fellows working at 44 agencies provide 34,800 hours of legal assistance to hundreds of disadvantaged people.
- PILI alumni number breaks the 1,500 mark.
- PILI's Pro Bono Initiative continues its work with 40 firms and 25 corporations in ground-breaking pro bono work involving transactional attorneys and joint projects by firms and corporations.
- PILI announces the first Pro Bono Honor Roll for law firms and corporate legal departments at its Annual Awards Luncheon. Twenty-two firms achieve honor roll status by: averaging 35 hours of pro bono time per attorney; increasing their pro bono hours by 5%; demonstrating more than half of the firm's attorneys participate in pro bono work; and/or implementing an innovative step involving more of its attorneys in pro bono work. Twelve in-house legal departments achieve honor roll status by demonstrating a meaningful participation in pro bono work.
- Baker & McKenzie is also honored with the Pro Bono Initiative Award and Honorable Abner J. Mikva is recognized with the Distinguished Public Service Award.
- Solid working relationships and generous financial support from law firms, corporations, foundations, and individuals help PILI meet its \$458,000 budget.

2004

- A team of transactional attorneys drawn from six different law firms and corporate legal departments pilot a non-profit legal assessment project. Using PILI as its first subject, the group reviews articles of incorporation and bylaws, meeting minutes, tax documents, compliance documents, employment policies, and intellectual property to assess an organization's legal needs. Two more audits for different agencies are planned before the end of the year.
- PILI's Pro Bono Initiative holds a 5th Anniversary Summit, where the leadership from 39 law firms and corporate legal departments meet to review the progress made in pro bono work over the past five years, and to discuss how to deepen their commitment to pro bono work.
- Katten Muchin Zavis Rosenman establishes a new Fellowship program, where the fellow's salary is split over two years, working at the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights for one year, and returning to Katten for the second year. This is the first program of its kind in Chicago.
- [Susan Curry](#), former executive director of several PILI-affiliated agencies, is selected to succeed Roslyn Lieb as PILI Executive Director.
- PILI hosts its first annual pro bono reception at the Terra Museum of American Art with 150 people in attendance to support the work of PILI's Pro Bono Initiative.
- By the year's end, more than 100 attorneys are involved with PILI's Pro Bono Initiative. Since the 1999 survey, pro bono hours at firms are up 18% to 42 hours per attorney. Hours at corporations are up 134%.
- Exelon is honored with the Pro Bono Initiative Award and Wallace C. Winter of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago received the Distinguished Public Service Award.

2005

- The annual pro bono reception is held at the Chicago Cultural Center with the theme of Pro Bono: A Culture of Service.
- Sixteen law firms and four corporate legal departments join PILI in submitting a letter of support for an amendment to the Illinois Supreme Court Rules to require reporting of pro bono and financial contributions in the annual attorney registration process.
- Representatives from seven Chicago law firms with fewer than 50 attorneys gather with PILI to discuss how to increase pro bono at small firms.
- Winston & Strawn received the Pro Bono Initiative Award and Howard A. Learner of the Environmental Law and Policy Center received the Distinguished Public Service Award at the PILI Annual Awards Luncheon. 32 law firms and 11 corporate legal departments are also recognized on the PILI's Pro Bono Honor Roll.
- The Strategic Planning Committee of the PILI Board of Directors evaluates the PILI strategic plan and explores the expansion of PBI's goals and objectives.

2006

- In June, PILI's Pro Bono Initiative expands and becomes a joint project of the PILI and The Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF) when the CBF commits a special grant to PILI from its George Brode Fund. [Michael G. Bergmann](#) is appointed as PBI's full-time director in July, succeeding Susan Shulman.
- PILI launches a pro bono e-newsletter.
- Thirty Chicago law firms and twelve corporations are recognized for their pro bono contributions on the 2006 PBI Honor Roll at the PILI Annual Awards Luncheon on December 7th. Of the 59 law firms and corporate in-house legal departments that respond to PILI's annual pro bono survey, 3,984 attorneys report handling pro bono cases totaling 271,087 hours. An additional 58,013 hours were contributed by 1,527 non-attorney staff.
- The law firm of Jenner & Block received this year's Pro Bono Initiative Award in recognition of its substantial contributions to pro bono and Randolph N. Stone received the Distinguished Public Service Award.

2007

- PILI establishes the [Semi-Annual Pro Bono Forum](#) intending to bring together pro bono leaders from law firms, corporations, law schools and legal aid agencies to discuss timely pro bono issues and share pro bono best practices.
- A massive revision of the Pro Bono Manual is undertaken and two new publications are released. The [Pro Bono Prospectus](#) is developed to aid law firm and corporate law department attorneys who are trying to encourage their firm or corporation to establish a formal pro bono program and to encourage fellow attorneys to participate in the organization's pro bono activities. The [Pro Bono Program Reference Guide](#), is developed to provide Illinois law firms and corporations with direction, best practices and relevant samples to aid their firm or corporation in developing or enhancing their pro bono program. Distinct versions of both publications are created for law firms and corporations. The publications are also made available, for the first time, online.
- PILI's annual pro bono reception is established as the "Celebrating Pro Bono" reception. Held on June 5, 2007 at the Harold Washington Library Center's Winter Garden Room, over 300 representatives from law firms, law schools, corporations and public interest law organizations attend the event. Over 40 members of the PILI Class of 2007 also attend.
- PILI established the [Agency Series](#) to gather CBF-funded and PILI-affiliated legal aid agencies to discuss pro bono program management best practices.
- On December 6, 2007, JPMorgan Chase & Co. receives the Pro Bono Initiative Award at the 2007 PILI Annual Awards Luncheon. Over 450 members of the legal community gather for this event, with Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke as the keynote speaker.

2008

- As a complement to the [Semi-Annual Pro Bono Forum](#), PILI launches a semi-annual [Corporate Roundtable Series](#) to bring together corporate pro bono leaders from around Illinois. The Corporate Roundtable Series provides corporate pro bono leaders with an opportunity to network, discuss the unique pro bono challenges facing corporate attorneys and to share best practices and strategies for successful pro bono programs.
- On June 10, 2008, the fifth annual "Celebrating Pro Bono" reception was again held at the Harold Washington Library Center's Winter Garden Room. Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas L. Kilbride delivers keynote remarks to the attendees at this year's event.
- June 2008 marked two years since PILI joined with the CBF as joint partners on the Pro Bono Initiative. Having successfully accomplished the collective goals of the joint partners, the formal joint partnership dissolved, with each partner continuing distinct yet complementary pro bono programming.
- Caterpillar receives the Pro Bono Initiative Award and former Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Ann McMorrow receives the Distinguished Public Service Award.
- PILI expands its pro bono focus consistent with its mission to cultivate a lifelong commitment to public interest law by working more intensively with the newly established [PILI Alumni Program](#), for former PILI Interns and Fellows, and widening its working relationships with the state's law schools regarding their public interest law efforts.

2009

- A newly designed and more comprehensive www.pili-law.org is launched.
- [PILI's e-newsletter](#) now reaches over 800 recipients and has information about PILI and its programs as well as information about the larger pro bono and public interest law community.
- PILI convened the first [Law School Pro Bono & Public Interest Law Roundtable](#) to bring together law school pro bono and public interest law faculty and staff from around Illinois.
- As an extension of PILI's Internship and Fellowship Programs and previous efforts at assisting law firms in placing associates at public interest law secondments and in response to a major economic downturn, PILI formally established its [Extended Placement Program](#).
- PILI and the entire Chicago legal community lost a dear friend when 94-year old Florence E. Miller passed away in 2008. A 1942 graduate of the John Marshall Law School, Florence was well known in the international trademark world, practicing intellectual property law for many years with Kimberly-Clark Corp., and with Brinks, Hofer, Gilson and Lione. A strong advocate for women in the profession and for her commitment to public interest law, Florence named PILI as one of the beneficiaries of her estate and PILI established the Florence E. Miller Endowment Fund.
- PILI organized the [Explore the Possibilities: Pro Bono & Public Interest Law Placements](#), a new program sponsored by PILI, Phi Alpha Delta and the Chicago Area Law School Consortium, this program is for law students and recent graduates who are interested in learning more about placements as volunteers, interns or externs, or fellows at public interest law organizations.
- PILI's Pro Bono Initiative hosted a Pro Bono Forum entitled "Advancing Pro Bono in the New Economy" and a Corporate Pro Bono Roundtable at GE Capital Americas Legal.
- Kirkland & Ellis received the Pro Bono Initiative Award and Northwestern University School of Law Professor Thomas Geraghty received the Distinguished Public Service Award.

2010

- PILI supported 43 summer and school-year Law Student Interns and 46 Graduate Fellows, who together contributed 26,000 hours of work on behalf of low-income individuals and families.
- PILI's first-ever [Alumni Reunion Reception](#) for former Interns and Fellows drew over 60 alumni from 1979-2010. As part of the event, PILI launched a new long-term funding goal of generating one [Alumni-Named Internship](#) per year funded directly through financial contributions made by PILI Alumni. PILI also co-hosted two CLE programs for Alumni and organized an Alumni program entitled "Service Opportunities in the Public Interest Law Community: Board Service, Pro Bono Work and Other Volunteer Roles."
- In partnership with Illinois Legal Aid Online, PILI developed and launched the Pro [Bono Case Pairing and Mentor Matching System](#) to connect law students, lawyers and paralegals from around the state

for purposes of staffing pro bono matters and mentoring new or inexperienced pro bono practitioners.

- PILI's Recognition Team nominated Caterpillar, Inc. to the Illinois State Bar Association for a pro bono award and Caterpillar was selected as the award recipient.
- At PILI's [Annual Pro Bono Reception: Celebrating Pro Bono](#), 29 law firms and 8 corporate legal departments were named to PILI's inaugural [Pro Bono Recognition Roster](#). The Roster acknowledges law firms and corporate legal departments that foster business cultures and legal careers featuring a commitment to public interest law and pro bono work. The Honorable Dorothy Kirie Kinnaird, Presiding Judge of the Chancery Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County was the distinguished guest and welcoming speaker.
- Accenture Legal Group received PILI's Pro Bono Initiative Award at the [Annual Awards Luncheon](#) for their exemplary pro bono work in the community. Jonathan K. Baum (Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP) received PILI's Distinguished Public Service Award, and receiving PILI's Distinguished Alumni Awards were Elizabeth Gibbons Lewis (Fellow 2006) and Jesus Perez (Intern 1992).
- Michael G. Bergmann, previously PILI's Director of Programs, was named PILI's Executive Director, succeeding Susan Curry.

2011

- Forty-three summer and school-year Law Student Interns and 40 Graduate Fellows contributed 28,000 hours of work on behalf of low-income individuals and families. Interns and Fellows together provided direct service or brief services to 2,600 individuals and policy or other impact-related work on behalf of thousands more.
- PILI conducted a special needs assessment study affirming the need for PILI's Law Student Internship Program and revealing a strong need for the program to grow. Supervisors at 33 Participating Agencies across the state requested an additional 102 PILI Interns for the next summer and school year.
- PILI's Alumni Program again hosted an Alumni Reunion Reception for former Interns and Fellows to raise money for an [Alumni Named Intern](#). PILI also hosted an Alumni CLE Program and Networking Reception entitled "Serving on a Nonprofit Board of Directors."
- PILI organized and hosted several Pro Bono Initiative events, including a [Corporate Pro Bono Roundtable](#), an [event for law students](#) about public interest and pro bono placements, and a [PILI Illinois Forum on Pro Bono](#). Ideas and strategies generated at the PILI Illinois Forum on Pro Bono were presented at the ABA Pro Bono Summit in October, and will be part of the Summit's ultimate goal of developing a nationally coordinated action plan for improving the pro bono legal services delivery model.
- PILI nominated Kirkland & Ellis LLP for the Illinois State Bar Association's prestigious John C. McAndrews Pro Bono Service Award, and Kirkland & Ellis LLP was selected as the award recipient.
- At PILI's [Annual Pro Bono Reception: Celebrating Pro Bono](#) on June 15th, 33 law firms and 9 corporate legal departments were named to PILI's [Pro Bono Recognition Roster](#), acknowledging their commitment to public interest law and pro bono work. Two hundred guests from the Illinois legal and public interest communities, including the 2011 class of PILI Interns & Fellows, were in attendance.
- The 2011 PILI [Annual Awards Luncheon](#) was held on December 1st and was attended by over 400 guests. Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride received PILI's Distinguished Public Service Award, and Mayer Brown LLP received PILI's Pro Bono Initiative Award. Recipients of the two Distinguished PILI Alumni Awards were Kathleen K. Clark, Lawyers Committee for Better Housing (1997 Intern) and Justin Lee Heather, Corey Cotter Heather & Richardson, LLC (2001 Fellow).

If you are interested in learning more about PILI, please contact
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More information can also be found on our website, www.pili-law.org.