
THE CIVIL PRO BONO PANEL

The United States District Court for the District of Columbia Civil Pro Bono Panel is a voluntary group of attorneys dedicated to assisting the Court and litigants who do not have legal representation. Created in 1991, the Panel is comprised of over 125 members, consisting of law firms and sole practitioners. Roughly 80 appointments are made each year in civil cases, including a substantial number of cases emanating from the prison system and a large number of workplace disputes.

How does it work?

Appointments from the Civil Pro Bono Panel are governed by Local Civil Rule 83.11. The rule creates a Committee on Pro Se Litigation which is appointed by the Chief Judge and comprised of private practitioners and government attorneys who are members of the District of Columbia Bar and who practice in this Court. The Committee oversees the Civil Pro Bono Panel and reports annually to the Court on its operation. Panel members may be individual attorneys, law firms or law school legal clinics that are willing to accept an appointment to represent indigent *pro se* parties in civil actions by submitting the attached application.

How does the judge decide to appoint counsel?

Panel members can only be appointed to represent a party that has been granted leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*. Otherwise, the decision to appoint counsel is within the discretion of the judge, taking into account:

- * the nature and complexity of the action;
- * the potential merit of the *pro se* party's claims;
- * the potential merit of the claims;
- * the demonstrated inability of the *pro se* party to retain counsel by other means; and
- * the degree to which the interests of justice will be served by appointment of counsel, including the benefit the Court may derive from the assistance of the appointed counsel.

Local Civil Rule 83.11(b)(3).

What happens next?

A judge cannot appoint directly from the Panel, but orders the Clerk to make the appointment. The Clerk selects a Panel member for appointment taking into consideration the experience and preferences of Panel members regarding specific types of cases and the equitable distribution of cases among Panel members. The appointment is made by letter and includes a copy of the file in the case. The appointed Panel member has thirty days from receipt of the appointment to enter an appearance or withdraw from the

appointment pursuant to Local Civil Rule 83.11 (b)(6). This period is to be used to check for potential conflicts and investigate the claims, including interviewing the *pro se* party.

What happens if counsel withdraws?

Withdrawing counsel is obligated to return all materials to the Court and to file the notice of withdrawal. It is left to the discretion of the judge whether or not to repeat the appointment process.

How many cases does each Panel member take?

Each Panel member can designate how many cases he/she is willing to accept on a yearly basis, what types of cases he/she is most qualified to handle, and any other relevant information. This information will be used when appointing counsel.

What about expenses?

The Pro Se Committee oversees the operation of the Indigent Civil Litigation Fund, a not-for-profit corporation created to reimburse Panel members for expenses incurred during the representation of their appointed clients. Additionally, Panel members may enter into an agreement for recovery of expenses and fees with the prior approval of the Court. Local Civil Rule 83.11(b)(8), (9).

Application to join the Civil Pro Bono Panel

Applicant: _____ Number of cases willing to accept per year: _____

Point of Contact if applicant is other than an individual: _____ Type of cases willing and qualified to accept:

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Prisoner's rights/habeas corpus petitions _____

Employment discrimination claims _____

FOIA/Privacy Act cases _____

Social Security appeals _____

42 U.S.C. § 1983 _____

Other _____

Language capability? _____

Prior civil trial experience or trial advocacy training: _____

I certify that I am a member in good standing of the Bar of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, or that I am in compliance with Local Civil Rule 83.10(b) of the Rules of this Court.

Signature _____ Date _____

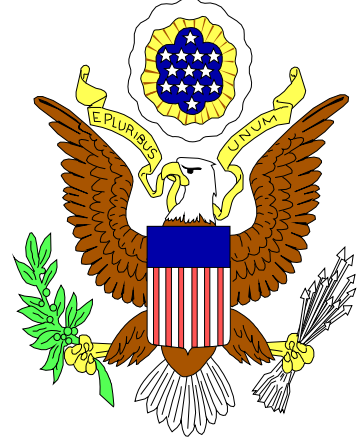
Please return to Clerk of Court, U.S. District Court for D.C., 3rd & Constitution, NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. For further information, please contact the Court's Pro Se Unit at (202) 354-3370. For information on joining the Bankruptcy Pro Bono Panel, contact the Chambers of the Hon. S. Martin Teel, Jr. at (202) 354-3530 or Michael Wint in the Clerk's Office at (202) 354-3188.

United States District Court
For the District of Columbia
Civil Pro Bono Panel
3rd & Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT &
BANKRUPTCY COURTS FOR THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CIVIL PRO BONO PANEL



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