

MEMORANDUM

To: Bankruptcy Bench and Bar

From: Hon. Rosemary Gambardella, US Bankruptcy Judge for the District of New Jersey

Re: Bankruptcy Pro Bono

Date: September 3, 2014

I am hopeful you enjoyed a pleasant summer and a happy Labor Day Holiday. I am writing about events and opportunities related to the pro bono practice of bankruptcy law. As you know, pro bono service is a core value of our profession, and I encourage you to perform as much pro bono service as you can.

1. Hon. Morris Stern Bankruptcy Pro Bono Project at Rutgers Law School-Newark – Luncheon on September 12 at noon – RSVP required

The Hon. Morris Stern Bankruptcy Pro Bono Project at Rutgers School of Law-Newark was dedicated and renamed in fond memory of its earliest champion, Hon. Morris Stern, at a memorial service on June 20 at the Federal Courthouse in Newark. The Project pairs experienced bankruptcy attorneys with trained law students to assist Chapter 7 filers with their petitions for relief. Cases are referred by legal services organizations that have included Essex-Newark Legal Services and Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (“VLJ”). The Project served 21 clients last year and is slated for growth in 2014-2015.

Training for law students will take place at Rutgers School of Law-Newark on Friday, September 12, from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM. A complementary networking lunch for the bankruptcy bar will be held from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM. You are cordially invited to attend as much of the day’s program as you can, and specifically to join me and your colleagues for lunch at noon.

- a. RSVP to Sasha Rashid at sasha.rashid@rutgers.edu by Wednesday, September 10 at 10:00 AM if you can come. Please provide your name, office phone, cell phone and email address.

- b. For free parking at Rutgers Parking Deck #1 (200 University Avenue), please also provide Sasha with the make, model and license plate number of your car. If you have provided this information, you will then receive a parking voucher at the training that you can use as you exit the parking deck. Do not park in the deck without registering first through Sasha, or you will get a ticket.
- c. Even if you cannot attend the training and luncheon, please consider volunteering in the Project as a pro bono attorney. The opportunity to serve those in need and to mentor law students is rewarding, and your service is much appreciated by the Court. To volunteer, please contact Jill Friedman, Asst. Dean for Pro Bono, at 856-225-6263 for an application.

2. Continuing Legal Education Program re: Ethics of Bankruptcy Pro Bono Practice at Lowenstein on November 12 at 5:30 PM

In the Matter of Opinion No. 17-2012 of the Advisory Committee on Professional Ethics, <http://www.vljnj.org/uploads/pdf/ACPE%20Opinion%20No%20%2017-2012%20.pdf>, decided unanimously by the New Jersey Supreme Court this past July, held that volunteer lawyers staffing VLJ's pro bono bankruptcy clinic can represent a low-income debtor in a no-asset Chapter 7 bankruptcy matter even if the attorney's firm represents one or more of the debtor's creditors in unrelated matters. With appropriate safeguards already in place, such attorneys do not face a conflict of interest under the Rules of Professional Conduct. The unanimous opinion is described here: http://www.vljnj.org/uploads/pdf/Reprint_7%2014%2014.pdf.

In light of the Court's ruling, Volunteer Lawyers for Justice and Lowenstein Sandler will host a CLE about pro bono bankruptcy practice on November 12, 2014 at 5:30 PM at Lowenstein. Panelists will include Hon. Judith Wizmur (United States Bankruptcy Judge, retired); Mary Seymour, Esq. (Lowenstein Sandler); Catherine Weiss (Lowenstein Sandler, LLC); and Karen Sacks (Volunteer Lawyers for Justice). Save the date; more information about RSVP's and CLE (ethics) will be forthcoming.

Thank you for sharing your bankruptcy expertise with those in need. The Court appreciates your commitment to pro bono service.