

WHY SHOULD YOU DONATE TO EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE?

By Twila Larkin

Because it's the right thing to do! Because we still believe in justice for all, don't we?

The fact is that in New Mexico, there isn't justice for all because there is a stratum of society that can't afford a lawyer. They can't access the legal system. Until we have equal access, we won't have justice for all. We all know New Mexico has a high poverty rate, and the poor have a higher share of legal problems. Yet only one out five people living in poverty manages to get help for legal problems. On the practice management side of this issue, self-represented litigants don't really understand the process. This stresses the whole legal justice system, and this affects your practice as a lawyer and your client's ability to efficiently access the legal system.

Did you know that you are required to provide pro bono hours or make a contribution to a legal services organization that provides services to persons of limited means? As of March 15, 2008, the New Mexico Supreme Court approved Rule 24-108 detailing requirements for pro bono service to implement Rule 16-601 of the Rules of Professional Responsibility. Each year a lawyer is required to provide 50 hours of legal services without fee to persons of limited means or to organizations that address the needs of persons of limited means. A lawyer may also provide these services at a substantially reduced rate but is encouraged to provide services without fee. In lieu of or in addition to pro bono hours provided, a lawyer may provide less than 50 hours of services, and make a financial contribution to an organization that provides legal services to persons of limited means in New Mexico. For instance, if 25 hours of pro bono services are provided, then the financial contribution should be \$250; if 40 hours, then \$100. Your monetary contribution to Equal Access to Justice can satisfy this requirement.

Did you know that your United Way contribution can be directed to EAJ? Your paycheck deduction can really add up over a year's time. Keep this in mind as your employer ramps up its United Way drive. If your spouse's employer has a United Way

campaign but you do not, encourage your spouse to contribute to United Way and direct it to EAJ. Other ways to donate are by mail at PO Box 92860, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2860; by e-mail to EAJ@nmbar.org; or at www.eaj-nm.org.

What Does EAJ Do With Your Money?

Your contributions go to state-wide services:

- New Mexico Legal Aid—provides free legal representation to poor New Mexicans in civil cases.
- The New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty—ensures that laws, policies and practices for those in poverty are legal, fair and effective.
- Law Access—offers free legal helpline assistance and referrals to low-income New Mexicans.
- DNA-People's Legal Services—represents and educates Navajo and San Juan County clients on their legal rights.

Your donation helps:

- Children
- The Elderly
- The Homeless
- The Disabled
- The Poor

The problems of low-income New Mexicans are problems that most of never face. EAJ helps prevent domestic violence and end job exploitation. EAJ helps low-income New Mexicans avoid homelessness, access health care, and secure adequate wages.



Please donate today if you are not working pro bono hours.

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