

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Baker Donelson Expands Pro Bono Program

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The law firm of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC has revised its pro bono policy in a move that could significantly increase the number of hours that its nearly 550 attorneys spend providing free legal services to people of limited means.

The Firm has implemented a new pro bono policy that provides billable hour credit to all attorneys for up to 50 hours per year of pro bono work, up from the previous credit total of 20 hours per year. According to Lisa Borden, Baker Donelson's Pro Bono Shareholder and a member of the Firm's Birmingham office, the change is designed to encourage the Firm's attorneys to dedicate even more of their time to providing legal representation free of charge to those who otherwise could not afford the services of an attorney.

"Attorneys are expected to spend a certain number of hours each year performing billable work for clients," said Ms. Borden. "Our new policy allows attorneys to count up to 50 hours of pro bono work each year toward their annual billable hour goal. Our expectation is that this will make it much easier for our attorneys to commit to contributing more of their time to serving those in need. Of course, many of our attorneys already devote more than 50 hours per year to pro bono work, and in those cases the additional billable hour credit helps to reward their efforts."

This is the latest enhancement in a pro bono program that has grown significantly in recent years. While the Firm has long advocated pro bono service, its commitment took on a more formal role in 2005 when it established a committee, led by Jonathan Cole of the Firm's Nashville office, to implement programs to promote the quality and quantity of the pro bono work being performed by Baker Donelson attorneys. In 2007, the Firm created the new position of Pro Bono Shareholder, naming Ms. Borden to that position to work with the committee in overseeing the development and administration of pro bono programs throughout Baker Donelson's 15 offices in five states and Washington, D.C. This move set a precedent for much of the southeastern U.S., with Baker Donelson being the first law firm in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee – and one of only 20 of the top 100 law firms in the country – with a dedicated pro bono office and firm-wide pro bono manager.

According to Pro Bono Committee Chair Jonathan Cole, these changes resulted in significant improvements in the amount and quality of pro bono work performed by the Firm's attorneys, and the goal of this latest change is to continue that trend. "Since fiscal year 2008, the Firm's pro bono hours have doubled, as have average pro bono hours per attorney," said Mr. Cole. "By increasing the billable credit for pro bono work to 50 hours per year, we are creating the potential for our attorneys to contribute thousands more hours each year to providing free legal services to the poor and disadvantaged. A lot of good can be achieved with that additional time devoted to pro bono work."

"Our Firm is very proud of what we've been able to accomplish, but we know our attorneys are willing and able to do so much more," said Ms. Borden. "This new policy will go a long way toward giving them the opportunity to make even more of a difference by devoting more time to using their skills to serve members of their communities who are in need."

Through its commitment to pro bono representation, Baker Donelson provides legal services to groups and

individuals likely to be marginalized in the legal system due to economic barriers. Over the years, the Firm's attorneys have provided a variety of counsel to many populations, including immigrants, refugees, the elderly and the impoverished. Baker Donelson's efforts include work on a wide range of matters, such as advocating for the homeless and organizations that serve the homeless, death penalty litigation, providing corporate legal services to non-profit organizations, and much more. Additional information on the Firm's Pro Bono efforts is available at <http://www.bakerdonelson.com/pro-bono/> .