



Public Counsel Remote Pro Bono Opportunities - 2020

The following is a list of current pro bono opportunities that lend themselves to working remotely. The primary contact for these matters is Public Counsel Pro Bono Director David Daniels, ddaniels@publiccounsel.org. However, there is an individual contact person for each matter who would welcome your outreach and pro bono support.

1. PROVIDE BRIEF BUSINESS LAW ADVICE TO ASSIST A SMALL DAY CARE PROVIDER

For all attorneys. Small day care providers for children are being especially hit with questions relative to the Covid-19 outbreak (business liability questions related to the transmission of the virus; lease obligation questions; labor and employment questions). Business lawyers can help answer these limited scope questions, and we can provide you with the technical expertise if you are not certain of the best approach and advice. Interactions with clients can take place remotely by phone and via e-mail. Contact: Carlo Castro at ccastro@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** On average, 3 to 5 hours over 2 to 3 weeks; deadlines are dependent on the matter.

2. COVID 19 BANKRUPTCY RESPONSE: IMMEDIATE NEED FOR EXPERIENCED BANKRUPTCY SPECIALISTS AND ATTORNEYS WILLING TO DO RESEARCH IN THE BANKRUPTCY CONTEXT

Experienced bankruptcy consumer attorneys who are able to assist individuals remotely and who have the capacity to receive documents electronically and review documents are needed right away. Attorneys willing to do research on court's ability to allow continuance of court deadlines during extenuating circumstances. Would require attorneys to look at what district, bankruptcy, and state courts have done in the past on a global basis for self-represented litigants during times of war and/or natural disaster. Interested persons should contact Maggie Bordeaux, at mbordeaux@publiccounsel.org.

3. TRANSLATION SERVICES

For all over 18 who are fluent in Spanish, or other languages, including Russian, Arabic and French. The biggest need is Spanish right now in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Most of Public Counsel's projects need translation services, for example, to conduct a client interview, or present a translated version of a document to a court or administrative tribunal. This work can be done remotely by phone and e-mail. Contact: Please sign up to our Volunteer Translator Database; you will be contacted when an opportunity arises for which we could use your assistance: <https://goo.gl/forms/Zv2JnPFIBoY9jmK42> **Time Commitment:** Varies, but often only a few hours.



4. ASSIST AN IMMIGRANT WHO IS A SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR OTHER CRIME OBTAIN LAWFUL RESIDENCY IN THE U.S. THROUGH A VAWA OR U-VISA APPLICATION

- a. *VAWA and U-Visa Representation:* For all attorneys. Assist immigrant men, women and children who are survivors of domestic violence and other crimes apply for and obtain lawful residency and access to social services through VAWA and U-Visa applications. You will undertake written advocacy and develop strong relationships with a vulnerable client. The majority of this work can be performed remotely over the phone and via e-mail. Additionally, filings can be handled remotely by mail. Contact: Gina Amato at gamato@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** About 25 to 30 hours over three to four months.

- b. *Adjustment of Status:* For California-licensed attorneys with at least two years experience; if you have less experience, you can be supervised by a more senior attorney at your law firm or corporate legal department. Take on an “adjustment of status” case for a prior recipient of U-Visa relief. Here is what’s involved: A U-Visa holder may apply for legal permanent residency three years after obtaining a U-Visa, but prior to its expiration. Obtaining legal permanent resident status enables one to travel outside of the U.S., provides additional protection from deportation, and allows one to apply for U.S. citizenship when eligible. With fear of deportation rampant in the immigrant community, this is an opportunity to help immigrants with temporary status seek more permanency in an effort to avoid the threat of separation from their loved ones. The totality of this work can be handled remotely over the phone and via e-mail. Additionally, filings can be handled remotely by mail. Contact: Gina Amato at gamato@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** About 10 to 20 hours. Petitions are adjudicated within about 7 months, and no hearings are required.

5. CONSUMER FRAUD AND CONSUMER PROTECTION MATTERS

For California-licensed attorneys with at least three years of experience; if you have less experience, you can be supervised by a more senior attorney at your law firm or corporate legal department. Assist a vulnerable client who has been defrauded out of her home, personal property or life savings or is facing immediate financial pressures due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Many cases involve bad-acting family members or unethical professionals operating independently from any prominent financial institutions. Consequently, these cases often do not create conflicts for law firms. Most cases are filed in a L.A. Superior Court, and offer a rich opportunity to gain litigation experience, including conducting the client interview, strategizing and shaping the case plan, drafting and filing the complaint, propounding and responding to discovery, preparing and arguing dispositive motions, and taking the matter to trial.



CONSUMER FRAUD AND CONSUMER PROTECTION MATTERS, CONT'D

While courts are closed or operating on a limited basis due to the Covid-19 virus, there is still much work on cases that can be handled remotely through telephonic, e-mail, and web-based document sharing systems. There is also a host of limited scope research projects that we need responded to in order to assist our clients. For example:

Legal research regarding delays, continuances, force majeure, defense of impossibility of payment, applications for hardship, payment deferrals. Additionally, we need more pro bono attorneys to help apply for and negotiate hardship deferrals/penalty forgiveness; legal research re continuances/extensions.

Contact: Steph Carroll at scarroll@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** Varies.

6. REVIEW AN APPELLATE RECORD, PREPARE AN APPELLATE BRIEF, OR ARGUE A CASE BEFORE AN APPELLATE COURT

For California licensed attorneys with at least three years of litigation experience that includes some practical involvement in appellate brief writing. Public Counsel's Appellate Law Program helps *pro se* litigants by evaluating their appeals to determine whether they are appropriate for placement with pro bono counsel for representation on appeal, and then locates pro bono counsel to handle appeals that make it through the screening process. Litigators and appellate specialists can both hone their appellate skills and further the interests of justice. The majority of this work can be handled remotely over the phone, via e-mail, and via access to court records through the internet. **The timing of any required oral argument for the case may be impacted by Covid-19-related court restrictions. Our experienced appellate law program supervisor can provide you with immediate and up to date advice on any and all applicable restrictions.** Contact: David Daniels at ddaniels@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** Varies.

7. ASSIST A NONPROFIT OR SMALL BUSINESS THAT HELPS IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITIES

For California licensed attorneys with at least three years of transactional or advisory experience in one or more of the identified specialty areas. The Community Development Project provides comprehensive transactional services to numerous nonprofit organizations and small businesses that help strengthen communities struggling with poverty. Work ranges from assisting newly-conceived nonprofits with incorporation and obtaining tax exemption, to providing advice to established nonprofits and small start-up businesses in numerous practice areas, including contracts, labor and employment, intellectual property, fundraising law, affordable housing, real estate, land use and licensing, and tax compliance. **Many nonprofits and small business have legal concerns in response to the Covid-19 virus outbreak, particularly in the areas of labor and employment and real estate/commercial leases. All of this advisory work for nonprofits and small businesses can be handled remotely over the phone, via e-mail, and/or through other web-based document sharing and interfacing.** Contact: Carlo Castro at ccastro@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** 5 to 25 hours.



8. HELP A VETERAN SECURE DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR THEIR SERVICE-RELATED INJURIES

For any licensed attorney. Many military veterans come home with injuries – both physical and mental – as a result of their time on active duty. CVA helps homeless and low-income veterans navigate the VA’s complex benefits system by representing them in their applications and appeals for service-connected disability compensation. Cases involve drafting client affidavits, developing evidence of their in-service injuries, requesting and reviewing military and medical records, and writing an advocacy brief to support their applications. This is a great opportunity to work one-on-one with a veteran client and then obtain the benefits they have earned. Much of this advocacy work can be handled remotely over the phone, via e-mail, and/or through other web-based document sharing and interfacing. For benefits work that requires VA attorney certification, Public Counsel can help you obtain this certification through the VA’s straightforward application process. Contact: CVA Administrative Assistant Alma Bonifacio at abonifacio@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** 40-50 hours.

9. REPRESENT A VETERAN IN IMPROVING THEIR MILITARY DISCHARGE STATUS AND ABILITY TO ACCESS THE BENEFITS THEY DESERVE

For any licensed attorneys. Service-members experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury do not always receive the treatment they need. As a result, their symptoms persist and too often are misconstrued as misconduct leading to their less than honorable discharge. They are thrown out with little support on the other side for their mental health and cognitive issues. This is an opportunity to advocate for a veteran in upgrading their discharge status which will open the door to VA healthcare and benefits, remove the stigma associated with their discharge, and increase their employment opportunities. Representation includes drafting client affidavits, developing supporting evidence, requesting and reviewing military and medical records, and writing an advocacy brief to support their applications. The majority of this work can be conducted remotely via telephone and e-mail with the clients. There are no physical appearances required at any hearings. Contact: CVA Administrative Assistant Alma Bonifacio at abonifacio@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** 25 - 40 hours.

10. HELP A VETERAN WITH AN OUTSTANDING TICKET OR WARRANT

Many veterans face challenges with barriers to stability caused by outstanding tickets and warrants for quality of life offenses (riding the metro and failing to pay fare; loitering; littering; jaywalking). These tickets, when they become delinquent, can prevent the veterans from accessing employment or housing – as they cause blemishes on the veterans’ background checks and records. Pro bono attorneys can eliminate these barriers by taking on a ticket case for a veteran and arguing in court that the ticket should be dismissed in the interest of justice. Courts are invariably sympathetic to helping veterans stabilize and are typically willing to dismiss the tickets if an attorney makes an appearance to argue for this. Much of the work can be done remotely by phone. There is only a single court appearance. **Due to the Covid-19 related court closures, some research will be required to determine when and how the court appearance will need to take place. Our CVA team can assist you with that research if you have questions.** Contact: CVA Administrative Assistant Alma Bonifacio at abonifacio@publiccounsel.org. **Time Commitment:** 5 – 10 hours.