

The Advisory Board of the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) supports the petition to amend rule 38(d) in the form and content suggested by the James E. Rogers College of Law in its comment posted January 26, 2007.

The VLP Advisory Board helps to advise and support the VLP staff. Comprised of ten members from the legal community, our membership includes two Superior Court Commissioners, one Superior Court Judge, one Federal Court Magistrate and six members of the private bar. The membership holds a combined total of 86 years of pro bono experience. With guidance from the Advisory Board, the VLP has been recognized nationally by the Legal Services Corporation as “a model of productivity and excellence.” The VLP program was also honored for its steadfast commitment, exceptional service and outstanding results at the American Bar Associations (ABA) Equal Justice Conference in 2003. Individually, Board members have been honored for their work with the VLP by the ABA, Governor Napolitano, the Arizona Supreme Court and the Foundation for Legal Services and Education.

The Advisory Board emphasizes that the VLP has continuously worked to develop programming which helps the poor and allows volunteer law students to gain real-world skills under the direct supervision of volunteer attorneys. With the addition of the proposed language to Rule 38(d), volunteer activities of law students will be formally recognized and codified by the Supreme Court of the State of Arizona. This will open the door for research and implementation of new programming initiatives invited by courts and in cooperation with the VLP and law schools throughout the state.

The addition of the proposed language included in the comment posted by the James E. Rogers College of Law clarifies the critical distinction between law school clinical programs and volunteer-based programs. It is the mission of the VLP to foster the pro bono ethic in students with the hope they will carry on such ethic upon graduation. Distinct from clinical programs, no credit is given for participation in VLP projects and the students who participate do not give legal advice nor represent clients.

The passage of this rule will place the State of Arizona Judiciary, the Arizona Volunteer Lawyer Programs and the Arizona law schools in a position of national leadership and example regarding community service programming and collaboration between volunteer organizations, the state, and educational institutions.

Respectfully,  
The 2006-2007 Volunteer Lawyers Advisory Board

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