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Upcoming Events

25th Annual Bench Bar Luncheon
May 8, 2025

From the President's Desk...

It is with great enthusiasm and gratitude that I write to you as President of our esteemed association. 2025 has already been marked by significant and meaningful events, reflecting the strength of our legal community and our shared commitment to excellence and service.



Brian W. Shea, Esq.

We began the year with another successful Vincent J. Apruzzese High School Mock Trial Competition, where students showcased their advocacy skills under the guidance of dedicated attorneys and judges. Special congratulations to the team from Princeton Day School that won the local competition and placed 3rd in the State. We also witnessed a historic moment with the swearing-in of Mercer County's newest Prosecutor, Janetta Marbrey, whose dedication to justice and fairness will undoubtedly benefit our county. Our practice area sections, in-

cluding Real Estate and Family Law, have already hosted engaging and informative programming, furthering professional development within our membership. Additionally, our Installation Dinner was a wonderful evening of camaraderie, bringing together colleagues, friends, and esteemed members of the bench and bar. I am appreciative of all who braved the last minute snowy, slippery weather to attend. A special thank you to NJ State Bar Association President William Mergner, Jr. who joined us as well. I am grateful for his and the State Bar Association's con-

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Lawyer

Winter 2025

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The **MERCER COUNTY LAWYER** is published four times per year; Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Advertisements appearing in the **MERCER COUNTY LAWYER** are the viewpoints of the contributors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mercer County Bar Association or its members. The MCBA does not vouch for the accuracy of any legal analysis, citations, or opinions expressed in any articles contained herein. Individuals who are interested in joining the Association, placing advertising, or contributing articles should contact the Bar Association

tinued support of our organization and look forward to a successful collaborative relationship this year.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting slate of events planned. In May, we will hold our General Membership Meeting, which will feature an Ethics CLE, providing valuable insights for our profession. We are also continuing our commitment to service with a Community Projects event at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, reinforcing our dedication to giving back to those in need. Networking remains a priority, and we look forward to fostering connections with other affinity and bar associations through collaborative events. A highlight of the spring will be our trip to Washington, D.C., where members will have the extraordinary opportunity to be sworn in before the Supreme Court of the United States.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on some of the things that have been surrounding our profession the last few months. As legal professionals, we are bound by our commitment to the rule of law, a principle that ensures fairness, justice, and stability in our society. Recent actions by the federal government, including the use of executive orders to curtail diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs and to influence judicial independence, raise concerns about the proper role of the legislative process in shaping policy. As an association, we remain steadfast in our support of the judiciary and the fundamental values that uphold our legal system. We look forward to working with the judiciary on meaningful programming and celebrating the integrity of our courts.

Our association thrives because of your dedication and participation. I encourage each of you to take advantage of the opportunities ahead—to learn, to serve, and to connect. I look forward to working together to make this year a memorable and impactful one for the Mercer County Bar Association.

Thank you for your continued support.

*** NEW to Mercer County Bar Association! ***

We welcome the following new members...

Hon. Neme Akunne, J.W.C., *Division of Workers Compensation*

Patricia Carrington, *Central Jersey Legal Services*

Brian Chacker, Esq., *Gay Chacker & Ginsburg PC*

Hon. Maria Delvalle-Koch, J.W.C., *Division of Workers Compensation*

Benjamin Gibson, Esq., *Petrelli Previtera, LLC*

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Rebekah Heilman, Esq., *Petrelli Previtera, LLC*

Victoria Wilton, Esq., *Stark & Stark*

Ryan Wintermute, Esq., *Stark & Stark*

Upcoming Events & Meetings

All Attorneys Are Invited To Attend Bench Bar Meetings

Trustee Meeting

Tuesday, April 1, 2025 | 5:30 pm

- This meeting will be held virtually via Zoom
- A calendar invite has been emailed

Lawyers Care

Thursday, April 10, 2025 | 5:00 pm

- This program will be held virtually via Zoom
- Please contact Michele at mkrasny@mercerbar.com to volunteer

Family Bench Bar

Thursday, April 17, 2025 | 3:30 pm

- This meeting will be held virtually via Zoom
- Register [here](#) for this meeting



Mercer County Bar Association
Installation Dinner & GM Meeting
Thursday, February 20, 2025
Trenton Country Club

On February 20, 2025, the MCBA hosted the Installation Dinner and General Membership meeting at Trenton Country Club. Brian W. Shea, Esq. was sworn in as the new President by Judge Robert Lytle. Other officers sworn in were Ross Switkes, Esq., *President-elect*; Jennifer Downing-Mathis, Esq., *Vice President*; Joseph Paravecchia, Esq., *Treasurer*; and Jenna Casper-Bloom, Esq., *Secretary*. The 2027 Trustees were also sworn in at the event.

Nick Travasano, Esq., Hon. Robert Lougy, and Robert Beckelman, Esq. participated in moderating and introductory remarks.

We thank our corporate and event sponsors: Princeton Brain Spine & Sports Medicine, Szaferman Lakind, Stark & Stark, WSFS Bank/Bryn Mawr, Renzi Legal Services, M&T Bank, All State Investigations, Hartman Duff, Foundation Title, Devlin, Cittadino & Shaw, Dennigan Cahill Smith, and Oswald & Zoschak.

















The Attorney Business Development Master Class CLE Presented by the Real Estate Section

1.0 CLE Credit NJ/PA Credits NJ Provider #268 – PA Provider #1006
PA Credits \$10.00 | Pre-registration is required

DATE: Friday, May 2, 2025
TIME: Noon to 1:30 p.m.
PLACE: Stevens & Lee, 510 Carnegie Center Drive, Ste 400, Princeton NJ 08540
COST: Members ~ \$25 | Non-Members ~ \$50
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Kevin J. Moore, Esq.; *Stevens & Lee*

Program Presenter:

Jeffrey Greif, First American Title Insurance Company/Direct Division
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Monmouth University Kislak Arthur M Greenbaum Mark of Distinction Award

About the Program:

This continuing legal education course focuses on professional business development strategies designed to foster growth in client acquisition, client retention and professional networking within the legal field. Through practical content, participants learn effective methods for expanding their professional network and improving their visibility within the business community in order to enhance revenue growth. The curriculum emphasizes professionalism in all aspects of client engagement and prospecting. Attendees gain specific actionable skills to advance their careers and succeed in a competitive legal landscape.

Presenter Jeffrey Greif has more than 37 years as a Professional Salesperson and 7 years as Media Planning Supervisor at the world's largest advertising agency.

This program is pending approval by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 1.0 hour of total CLE credit. Of these, 0.0 qualify as hours of credit for ethics/diversity and inclusion, and 0.0 will qualify as hours of credit toward certification in civil trial law, criminal trial law, workers compensation law, municipal court law and/or matrimonial law. Register and pay online at www.mercercbar.com

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“Let’s Step it Up!”

*Submitted by: Denise Mariani, Esq.
Stark & Stark*

Having been a practicing attorney for over 30 years, I find myself reminiscing more than ever about how much the Mercer County Bar Association shaped me professionally and personally. I know many of you feel the same as we have had those conversations. Many of us recall the days when the MCBA events were filled to capacity.

I told this story when I was honored with the 2022 Michael J. Nizolek Award. My very first MCBA event in 1992 was so memorable because of the warm welcome I received from then President Mike Nizolek and so many others too numerous to list. I thought to myself, “These are my people!” Soon thereafter, I joined the Community Projects Committee and became obsessed with community service. I learned that there is so much need right in our backyard. I also learned how generous our MCBA members are when asked to help.

Over the years, the MCBA’s Community Projects Committee planned and implanted so many projects throughout the Mercer County community including collecting fans for seniors, hats and

gloves for the Trenton Rescue Mission and school supplies for the children. The Committee went into local schools to help struggling children read and drove meals to those who are homebound through Meals On Wheels. We did coat drives, food drives, toy drives and every type of collection imaginable. We had a tremendous presence in the community. While the MCBA still has a wonderful presence in the community, we can do better. We need to do better.

The COVID pandemic set us back as it did so many organizations. As the “virtual” world expanded, personal connections took a hit. Emails and zoom meetings replaced court appearances and in person proceedings. The MCBA struggles to get members to attend events. Actually, a lot of groups struggle with attendance for events, especially the nonprofit organizations.

Please, let’s change this! Bar associations are so important to our profession. They provide an opportunity for lawyers and judges to come together, learn from each other, support each other and join forces to support our

community. If bar associations are not supported, they will cease to exist. We cannot let this happen to our MCBA.

What can you do? Show up and support the events. It really is that simple. I am also thrilled to announce what the Community Projects Committee is up to. There are so many nonprofit organizations in our community who need our support. So, with the support of Anita Mangat, Michele Krasny and President Brian Shea, my Community Projects Co-Chairs Nick Kant and James Evans, we have mobilized the forces!



The 25 member Community Projects Committee of the MCBA had its organizational meeting to plan events and drives for the rest of the year. The agenda will be announced in a special email as we are still working out the details. We are truly hopeful that each and every member of this Association will answer our call for help. We are also working on creating a directory of Mercer County Organizations which serve the community. We plan to list items typically needed by each organization so that our members can make specific donations where they are most needed.

First on the list of events, the Community Projects Committee has chosen April 30, 2025 to serve dinner at TASK (Trenton Area Soup Kitchen). Please check out the TASK website and if there are no spots left on that day, I encourage all of you to sign up for serving another meal on behalf of the MCBA. The next event will be the Bench-Bar luncheon on May 8, 2025. The Community Projects Committee will announce what items will be collected during that event and for which organization. We hope to see all of you there and please look for the future requests from our Community Projects Committee.

Lawyer Well-Being

Submitted by: Tina E. Bernstein, Esq.

In March 2019, I attended an MCBA seminar on promoting well-being in the legal profession. Six years later, I still have my notes from that seminar and have been thinking about it more and more lately.

One of my “take aways” was the idea that stress isn’t all bad, but that there is a need to positively manage the pressures inherent in our profession.

An important goal must be to balance the work component of our lives by developing or enhancing the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and/or spiritual dimensions of our lives.

Some professions, notably or exclusively the teaching profession, have a well-established component, a recognition of the need to balance—known as a sabbatical. This opportunity encourages educators to remove themselves from their regular schedule and undertake a temporary respite from the normal routine, to enrich, restore, rejuvenate themselves which will result in a refreshment that will lead to an im-

proved attitude and perspective that will benefit both themselves and their students.

The concept of sabbatical, of course, comes from the biblical creation story—that the world and all in it was created in six days and on the seventh day, the Sabbath, the Lord rested. For many religions, the Sabbath is a one day a week removal from the work week...a time for spiritual renewal as well as a time set aside for re-connections and restoration of the body and spirit.

As an attorney in private practice, whether a sole practitioner or in a small, medium or large firm, it seems like an impossible dream to consider taking a sabbatical and still maintain a viable practice.

I am here to say it is possible; it may not be done easily but it can be done on a limited basis. It just takes time and planning.

A sabbatical where you are NOT working remotely; a break where you are re-

newing your commitment to improving your mind and attitude, coming back re-stored and refreshed.

Even as a sole practitioner, you can establish a professional relationship, with a built-in reciprocity provision, with another attorney or law firm, to cover for you for 5-7 days, to really clear your mind, re-set your homeostasis, re-cement your family and personal relationships, in a remote location (not your home or office), without checking client emails, or voice messages, without reviewing contracts or preparing motions or briefs, thereby establishing personal boundaries.

Those of us who rarely if ever take even a single sick day in a year need to set up a routine—once a year— for a real, albeit limited sabbatical...not a working vacation!!! The costs will pay off in a refreshed and maybe even a happier you!





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SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

At Szaferman Lakind, we are committed to supporting organizations that address vital needs and foster resilience within our community. Their work creates lasting, positive change for individuals and families, and we are honored to highlight the profound impact they have.

Firm partner **Edward Kahn** reflects this commitment by providing annual scholarships to Trenton Central High School students pursuing higher education at Mercer County Community College (MCCC). This year, more than 10 seniors will receive renewable scholarships, helping to ease financial burdens and pave the way for academic success.

In addition to these meaningful efforts, Szaferman Lakind proudly supports a broad range of organizations that tackle critical challenges and strengthen the foundation of our community.

Addressing Homelessness and Housing Needs

- **Rescue Mission of Trenton:** Provides shelter, food, counseling, and job training for individuals experiencing hardship.
- **HomeFront:** Works to end homelessness in Central New Jersey by offering immediate assistance and long-term solutions.
- **Princeton Community Housing:** Promotes inclusivity by providing access to affordable and safe housing.

Empowering Youth and Families

- **Anchor House Foundation:** Offers a safe haven and resources to help at-risk youth achieve stability.

- **PEI Kids:** Focuses on preventing child abuse and advocating for the protection of children.

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters:** Empowers children through one-to-one mentoring that fosters growth and confidence.

Supporting Victims and Promoting Justice

- **Womanspace:** Provides crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.
- **American Bar Foundation:** Advances research on the role of law in society to promote fairness and justice.

Improving Health and Well-Being

- **Clara's Heart:** Supports families dealing with pediatric heart conditions through financial and emotional assistance.
- **Jordy Foundation:** Focuses on education, health, and community development to enhance quality of life.

Fostering Community and Spiritual Support

- **St. Mary's Church:** Provides spiritual guidance and essential social services to strengthen the community.

These organizations exemplify what it means to make a difference. By supporting their missions, we join their efforts to uplift individuals, families, and entire communities.

Mercer County Clerk Informs Public of Recent U.S. Passport Gender Marker Policy Changes

*Submitted by: Paula Sollami Covello
Mercer County Clerk*

TRENTON -- Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello advises that the U.S. Department of State has ceased issuing passports with the "X" gender marker, which prior to January 20, 2025, was available to non-binary individuals who do not identify as strictly male or female. As a result, applications submitted with an "X" gender marker have been placed on hold by the Federal Government.

On February 11, 2025, Secretary of State Marco Rubio further instructed State Department staff to assign a male or female sex designation to transgender passport applicants already submitted. If sufficient evidence of biological sex at birth is not provided, applications will be suspended until appropriate documentation is submitted.

For individuals currently holding passports with an "X" gender marker, we recommend contacting the U.S. Department of State for guidance on obtaining a new passport with a male or female designation. For further information or

assistance regarding the recent policy change, please contact the U.S. Department of State or visit their official website.

Mercer County Clerk Sollami Covello acknowledges the challenges this policy shift may present to our community members who have already applied through one of her Office's two locations for a passport. "While our Office does not have the authority to override these Federally mandated changes, we stand in solidarity with those affected and regret any inconvenience caused. This action, which began via a Presidential Executive Order, is beyond our jurisdiction," she added.

The Mercer County Clerk's Office remains committed to assisting Mercer residents with their passport needs. We provide passport services in two locations on a regular basis: in Trenton and at the Mercer County Connection Office in Hamilton. In Hamilton, services are by appointment only due to a

significant increase in demand for passports. The hours and locations are listed below:

Mercer County Connection Passport Service Hours

957 Highway 33, Hamilton, NJ 08690

Open: 10:00 AM - 5:30 PM (Monday, Wednesday & Friday)

10:00 AM - 6:00 PM (Tuesday & Thursday)

10:00 AM - 1:30 PM (Saturday)

Trenton Office Hours

209 South Broad Street, Trenton, NJ 08608

Open: 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday)

8:00 AM - 6:45 PM (Wednesday)

Please visit [Mercer County Passport Appointments](#) to schedule an appointment for Hamilton or call our main office in Trenton at 609-989-6473. We encourage applicants to review the required documentation prior to their appointment to ensure a smooth process. Detailed information can be found on our website: [Passports | Mercer County, NJ](#)

Additionally, we will hold two passport service events this Spring. The County Clerk's Office will be in Princeton on March 19th along with Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman and hosted by Mayor Mark Freda. Also, the County Clerk's Office will visit East Windsor, hosted by Mayor Janice Mironov, on April 2nd, 2025. Appointments may be made for these locations by contacting 609-989-6473. Please visit our website for further details at [County Clerk | Mercer County, NJ](#)

Contact: Brian DeGennaro 609-989-6074

How a Private Investigator Can Help with Your Divorce

Submitted by: Allstate Investigations

You may think that hiring a private investigator is simply for peace of mind, but this individual can actually be a powerful tool in your divorce case. The more informed you are, the better prepared you will be to go through the divorce process with realistic expectations and your head held high. But first, there are a few things you should know.

Infidelity

If you're like many people, you may be hiring a PI because you think your spouse is being unfaithful. A private investigator can provide valuable information and evidence as to what your spouse is doing throughout the day, and whether or not they are having an affair.

Conduct is relevant to the divorce case, and a consideration when dividing your property, but do keep in mind that the courts typically do not penalize someone because of infidelity. With that said, knowing for sure whether or

not your spouse is cheating can help bring closure to the case and allow you to move on.

Child Abuse and Neglect

A second way that a private investigator can help is by offering relevant information with regard to children. If you are working on a custody agreement but have concerns regarding child abuse, neglect or addiction, obtaining proof is an effective way to have the court rule in your favor. Keeping children safe is a priority in any divorce case, and courts will take this information seriously.

Hidden Assets

A private investigator can collect financial information if you think there may be hidden assets. These professionals have access to certain tools that the general public does not, and they may be able to locate hidden assets that can make a difference in the division of property.

Choose a Reputable Private Investigator

When hiring a PI, make sure they do things by the books. There are laws that prohibit the illegal wiretapping and surveillance of computers. There are also restrictions on how financial information can be obtained. If your private investigator does happen to find something but isn't doing things by the books, you won't be able to use this evidence in court. Bottom line: You're paying for information, so make sure the PI works within the boundaries of the law.

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Anthony "Tony" DeLorenzo has almost 50 years of experience dealing with Investigations, involving Matrimonial, Child Custody and Cohabitation. All State Investigations, Inc. is based in New Jersey and covers Metro New York, with access to 20 Investigators locally and has successfully built a network of over 200 agents, in the U.S. and Worldwide.

Tony has appeared on over 150 national talk shows such as Oprah, 20/20, Today Show, ABC, 20/20, BBC, and so many others. He has hundreds of radio interviews and dozens of magazine articles. Tony has also authored two books; The 28 Tell -Tale Signs of Cheating Spouse, and Warning Signs.

All State Investigations, Inc. has always been the #1 agency specializing in infidelity, divorce, child custody, child support, cohabitation and even catching Catfish.

Unlocking Financial Flexibility with Marketable Secured Lines of Credit

*Submitted by: John Ventura, Senior Vice President and
Senior Private Banking Relationship Manager, WSFS Bank*

In the realm of finance, liquidity is paramount. Whether you're seizing investment opportunities or managing unexpected expenses, having access to cash without disrupting your long-term financial strategy is crucial. Enter **Marketable Secured Lines of Credit (MSLOCs)**—a strategic solution that leverages your investment portfolio while preserving its integrity.

How MSLOCs Work

1. Collateral from Marketable Securities:

- o MSLOCs utilize your marketable securities (such as stocks and bonds) as collateral.
- o Unlike traditional loans, MSLOCs don't impose fixed repayment schedules. You decide when and how much to borrow.

2. Determining Collateral Value:

- o Brokerage firms assess the maximum credit available based on your securities' value.
- o Typically, you can borrow around 60% to 70% of your portfolio value, considering market volatility.
- o Larger portfolios often yield lower interest rates.

3. Interest Rates and Flexibility:

- o MSLOCs offer competitive interest rates compared to credit cards or personal loans.
- o Borrow and repay as needed without rigid payment structures.
- o Your overall assets held at the brokerage firm influence the interest rate.

Advantages of MSLOCs

1. Preserving Investments:

- o Avoid selling securities outright, which could trigger capital gains taxes and disrupt your investment strategy.
- o Keep your portfolio intact while accessing cash.

2. Tax Efficiency:

- o MSLOCs allow you to access funds without realizing capital gains, making them tax-

efficient for long-term investors.

3. Lower Rates and Fees:

- o Favorable interest rates compared to credit cards or unsecured loans
- o No setup fees, non-use charges, or cancellation costs

4. Leverage and Opportunities:

- o Use your existing portfolio to seize investment chances or cover unforeseen expenses
- o Whether it's a down payment on real estate or business expansion, MSLOCs provide flexibility.

Comparing Collateral Options

1. Marketable Securities vs. Real Estate:

- o While real estate can serve as collateral, it lacks the liquidity and ease of MSLOCs.
- o Selling property involves time-consuming processes and transaction costs.

2. MSLOCs vs. Traditional Loans:

- o MSLOCs offer greater flexibility and tax advantages.
- o Traditional loans often come with fixed repayment schedules and higher interest rates.

MSLOCs empower you to access cash strategically while safeguarding your investment goals. Consult a financial advisor to tailor this approach to your unique circumstances and explore the benefits of leveraging your marketable securities.

About the Author – John Ventura

[John Ventura](#) is a Senior Vice President and Senior Private Banking Relationship Manager. Ventura has more than 15 years of experience in private banking, including assisting clients with financial planning, portfolio management, asset allocation, trust administration and estate settlement, hedge funds, private equity and real estate, risk mitigation, and complex tax and legal issues. John can be reached at jventura@wsfsbank.com.

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For more information about Marketable Secured Lines of Credit, contact WSFS Private Banking at [WSFSBANK.COM/PB](https://www.wsfsbank.com/pb) or 888.988.4510.



...

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- ✓ ADOPTIONS
- ✓ BANKRUPTCY
- ✓ EXPUNGEMENT

...

CHOOSE A PRO BONO CASE THAT FITS YOUR INTERESTS AND YOUR SCHEDULE!

Remember that completing twenty-five hours of pro bono service for CJLS earns you an exemption from the mandatory Madden assignment for that year!

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:

Dan Rubin, Deputy Director,
(609) 695-6249 | drubin@lsnj.org



Why Pro Bono?

*Submitted by: Dan Rubin, Deputy Director
Central Jersey Legal Services*

“The current Madden system of random assignments to uncompensated counsel is not effective in matching willing and skilled attorneys with economically disadvantaged clients facing consequences of magnitude.” That was the conclusion of the Judiciary’s Working Group on Attorney Pro Bono Assignments. It’s a grim assessment, which has resulted in numerous proposals to revise or overhaul the current pro bono assignment system.

So how to best work within the current pro bono framework? The Judiciary Working Group, the New Jersey State Bar Association, and other commenters have emphasized the importance of utilizing an attorney’s private practice areas of knowledge in their pro bono cases. Such assignments give the pro bono client access to an attorney with subject matter expertise, and avoid situations where the pro bono attorney is trying to learn an unfamiliar area of law on a short deadline with grave consequences to the client.

To that end, we at Central Jersey Legal Services want to hear from you as to what types of cases you are interested in handling pro bono. We currently make pro bono referrals for clients seeking assistance with guardianships, tort defense, name changes, family law, education law, adoptions, bankruptcy, and expungements. But we are open to discussing pro bono referrals for other civil matters that may be of interest to you.

I fully recognize and acknowledge the challenge of fitting a pro bono assignment into your already packed schedule, particularly for those in small and solo firms. To alleviate those challenges, you may consider providing pro bono services in a clinic-based setting, where clients receive advice on a distinct matter, but representation does not extend beyond the clinic. CJLS has operated such clinics in the past, and we are exploring resuming the clinics if there is interest among the membership for that type of pro bono service.

Pro bono works best as a partnership between public interest firms, private attorneys, and the courts, where pro bono attorneys are matched with matters that interest them and/or where they have experience. I would very much like to use my position to help you connect with a pro bono case that fits your interest and expertise. Please contact me by phone at (609) 695-6249 or email at dru-bin@lsnj.org to discuss further.

Many thanks to President Brian Shea and the MCBA staff for their support of pro bono, and I look forward to continuing to partner with the Bar Association to meet the legal needs of all Mercer County residents.

New Jersey Judiciary Working Group on Attorney Pro Bono Assignments Report and Recommendations, available at <https://www.njcourts.gov/sites/default/files/sccr/reports/probonoreport.pdf>.





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