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New Site Supports Pro Bono Immigration Efforts for Haitians

Lawyers' Earthquake Response Network and Pro Bono Net Launch Portal for Volunteer Lawyers

NEW YORK (May 5, 2010) – A new website seeks to help mobilize and support attorneys wishing to respond to the earthquake in Haiti by helping Haitian immigrants apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

The Haitian Immigration Pro Bono Project (www.probono.net/haitianimmigration) will help volunteer lawyers and law students seeking to assist Haitian TPS applicants find local opportunities and resource materials. TPS is granted to selected immigrants who cannot safely return to their homelands because of natural disasters, armed conflicts or other emergencies, and was made available to Haitians shortly after January's devastating earthquake.

The site was developed by Pro Bono Net, a national nonprofit that works to increase access to justice, and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti's Lawyers' Earthquake Response Network (LERN), a national network of lawyers working with Haitian lawyers to implement a legal response to the earthquake.

Haitians in the United States must file for TPS on or before July 20, 2010. Free or low-cost legal service providers in many areas will be hard-pressed to meet the demand as the deadline approaches. Trained volunteer attorneys, law students, and paralegals can help close the gap.

"This site will make it easier for the hundreds of lawyers and law students who offered their services after Haiti's earthquake to find local volunteer opportunities with organizations that are trying to meet the needs of eligible Haitian immigrants to apply for TPS before the deadline," said Brian Concannon, Jr., Director of the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH). "It will also facilitate the sharing of legal research and other information among the providers themselves."

“The Haitian Immigration Pro Bono Project exemplifies the way that innovative technology solutions and a willingness to collaborate can enable a timely and effective response by the legal community to emergent needs,” said Mark O’Brien, Executive Director of Pro Bono Net.

The Haitian Immigration Pro Bono Project site includes a searchable database of legal services programs providing services to TPS applicants, which pro bono attorneys, law students and others can use to find volunteer opportunities. Volunteers can also find links to resources including TPS background materials, a national and local training calendar and a news feed. Local service providers can submit information on trainings and clinics for pro bono attorneys and law student volunteers. The site leverages a technology platform developed by Pro Bono Net, which is used to support broad-based networks of legal aid, civil rights and pro bono lawyers.

Advocates interested in signing up can visit www.probono.net/haitianimmigration. Organizations wishing to make opportunities available can add them to the database at <http://tiny.cc/lmp53>.

About Pro Bono Net

Pro Bono Net is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to justice through increased volunteer lawyer participation and innovative use of technology. Founded in 1998, Pro Bono Net has created a powerful network of nonprofit legal aid providers, courts and bar associations across the United States and Canada. Pro Bono Net is also a partner in the Immigration Advocates Network, a national online network that supports legal advocates working on behalf of immigrants' rights. For more information, please visit www.probono.net or www.immigrationadvocates.org.

About IJDH/LERN

The Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti ([IJDH](http://www.ijdh.org)), with its Haiti-based affiliate, the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), fights for human rights and justice in Haiti and for fair and just treatment of Haitian immigrants in the United States. After receiving an outpouring of support from legal professionals nationwide seeking to volunteer their services, IJDH on January 17 launched the Lawyers' Earthquake Response Network ([LERN](http://www.lern.org)), which now has over 360 attorneys and law students responding to various post-earthquake needs, the largest number working on U.S. immigration issues.

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