



NYSBA News Release

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Contact: Susan DeSantis

sdesantis@nysba.org

201-575-5756

NEW PRO BONO INITIATIVE HELPS JOBLESS NEW YORKERS SECURE UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

New Yorkers who need help securing unemployment benefits through the appeal process will be matched with attorneys provided by the pro bono partnership launched by the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) and the state court system. Hundreds of lawyers are preparing to assist clients beginning this week.

A new innovative website, www.nysba.org/legalhelp, provides resources for filing an unemployment claim and will match attorneys – free of charge – with those whose claims are unsuccessful.

“Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are out of work due to the coronavirus, and we know that some of them will need help to obtain the unemployment benefits to which they are entitled,” said Chief Judge Janet DiFiore. “We are pleased to partner with NYSBA to offer this vital assistance and we thank all the generous lawyers who are giving of their time so selflessly.”

“Becoming unemployed is one of the most stress-inducing things that can happen in a person’s life, and we are dedicated to reducing that anxiety any way we can. This program will help ensure New Yorkers can access the benefits they need and deserve,” said New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon. “I’d like to personally thank the bar association, the court system and the hundreds of lawyers who have stepped up to help their neighbors during this difficult time.”

“This is an unprecedented moment for New York and the legal community alike,” said NYSBA President Henry M. (Hank) Greenberg. “It’s gratifying to see so many lawyers willing to put their expertise at the disposal of those who are suffering. We know that unemployment benefits are a lifeline for many families, and we welcome the opportunity to provide assistance.”

Former Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, of counsel at Latham & Watkins and coordinator of the network, praised everyone involved for getting the pro bono network up and running in such a short period of time.

“Ensuring access to justice is paramount right now,” Lippman said. “This project will help unemployed New Yorkers get the benefits they need and are entitled to.”

The site provides guidance both on filing unemployment claims and how to find help if those claims are denied. Participants detail their Unemployment Insurance or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claims using an intake form, developed by [Clio](#), a legal tech provider. Once complete, NYSBA will use Clio's client intake software to match the participants with pro bono attorneys onboarded and made available through [Paladin's](#) online portal of volunteers. To ensure efficiency and ease, pro bono attorneys will be given free access to Clio's secure case management software to manage the appeal process.

"We're honored to use our software to help NYSBA streamline access to justice for so many who need it," said Jack Newton, CEO and co-founder of Clio.

"By creating one central place for New York attorneys to find, learn about, and sign up for COVID-related pro bono work, we'll be able to connect more individuals in need with qualified attorneys, faster," said Kristen Sonday, Paladin's co-founder.

More than 26 million Americans – including over 1.4 million New Yorkers - have filed unemployment claims in recent weeks. More than 1,500 attorneys attended NYSBA's recent training program, "Applying for Unemployment: Client Counseling Under the CARES Act."

New York's existing network of pro bono and public defense attorneys was strained prior to COVID-19. The state court system and NYSBA are taking this action to ensure that all New Yorkers can exercise their right to legal counsel at a time when the need for legal services will likely be higher than ever before, and fewer people will be able to afford representation.

While the pro bono network's first task is handling unemployment benefits, it is quickly gearing up to also address a range of other issues - from evictions to domestic violence to job and housing discrimination.

Lawyers who are interested in joining this cause should go to <https://nysba.org/covidvolunteer> to sign up. If you have specific questions about volunteering, please contact NYSBA via e-mail: covidvolunteer@nysba.org.

For more information regarding the partnership: <https://nysba.org/ny-state-court-system-joins-with-new-york-state-bar-association-to-launch-pro-bono-network-to-respond-to-pandemic/>

In addition, NYSBA has transformed its website and social media accounts into hubs of legal information regarding the COVID-19 crisis. Learn more at: <https://nysba.org/coronavirus>.

About the New York State Bar Association

The New York State Bar Association is the largest voluntary state bar association in the nation. Since 1876, the Association has helped shape the development of law, educated and informed the legal profession and the public, and championed the rights of New Yorkers through advocacy and guidance in our communities.

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