

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.

## Talks begin over CLE credit for lawyers' pro bono work



Maria J. Minor of Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP and Marc R. Kadish of Mayer, Brown LLP

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Two local lawyers are spearheading the concept of Illinois lawyers obtaining Continuing Legal Education credits for handling certain pro bono matters.

[Marc R. Kadish](#), director of pro bono activities and litigation training for Mayer, Brown LLP, and [Maria J. Minor](#), professional development manager at Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP, recently teamed up to work on a proposal that would eventually go to the Illinois Supreme Court. Kadish and Minor stressed that the proposal remains a work in progress.

"Obviously, we will seek input on this issue from lawyers throughout Illinois," Kadish said. "It won't work if it seems to be a Chicago-imposed idea."

Minor said, "In Illinois our next step will be to try to pull together a meeting with people from downstate, legal service providers and other interested parties in the pro bono world" within a few months.

Kadish said he previously became aware that New York allowed lawyers to receive some CLE credit for handling pro bono matters.

Now, a total of seven states, including New York, give some CLE credit for lawyers who work on pro bono matters, Minor said.

Kadish asked Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice [Thomas L. Kilbride](#) if he believed giving lawyers CLE credit for pro bono work would be a good idea.

Kilbride later asked Kadish to put a proposal in writing so the idea could be studied, Kadish said.

Kadish later raised the idea at a regular monthly meeting attended by about 13 full-time pro bono coordinators. Minor said at the meeting that she wanted to work on the proposal with him, Kadish said.

[Jayne Rizzo Reardon](#), the executive director of the Illinois Supreme Court's Commission on Professionalism, and [Karen Litscher Johnson](#), director of the Illinois Supreme Court's MCLE Board, attended the January monthly meeting where the concept got discussed, Kadish said.

"The commission does intend to reach out and get opinions from various people involved in the delivery of pro bono services," Reardon said. "We will probably coordinate with the MCLE Board so that the commissioners can make an informed decision."

Johnson said no proposal got presented at the January meeting.

"The board will proceed as they always have with suggestions from individual attorneys or any legal organizations to review what the (proposal) is, discuss it, reach out for additional information from other states, and proceed in a way that considers the entire program and what's best for the MCLE program overall," Johnson said.

Last month, Kadish and Minor also attended the Chicago Bar Foundation's Law Firm Leadership Circle meeting that included [John G. Levi](#), a Sidley, Austin LLP partner and chairman of LSC's board of directors.

The LSC maintains a task force working group "examining how to recommend nationally that states consider giving some kind of CLE credit for pro bono work," Levi said. He said its recommendation could be released in mid-April.

"Looking at the layoffs at (the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago) and the funding cuts for the Legal Services Corporation, the need for pro bono is just increasing," Minor said. "We as a profession need to step in."