

United States Bankruptcy Court

Central District of California

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February 6, 2020

An Open Letter to the Bankruptcy Bar

The Bankruptcy Judges of the Central District of California once again urge you to consider volunteering for one of the bankruptcy *pro bono* opportunities available in your area. Over the past several years, notwithstanding the cyclical increases and decreases in our filing numbers, one thing has remained constant: there are large numbers of low-income individuals in our court in need of representation. Organizations currently assisting low-income people in our district see hundreds of families on the brink of foreclosure or in other economic distress each year.

Volunteer opportunities available range from commitments that require only a few hours every other month at a clinic to full representation in a chapter 7 case or adversary proceeding. With a self-help desk in every division, you can easily volunteer close to home for only the number of hours that fit into your schedule. Consumer bankruptcy training may be available for you. While most requests are for debtor assistance, low-income creditor assistance is needed as well. The programs are structured so that attorneys who generally represent creditors may volunteer without concern about conflicts of interest or being designated a debt relief agency. The vast majority of the people who come to these programs cannot afford counsel, but attorney referrals are also made through these organizations where appropriate.

Even a brief consultation with an attorney can make a big difference to an unrepresented party. Attorney assistance also greatly helps the court and other litigants. You can find contact information for an organization in your area, along with the types of opportunities available on the Court's website (<https://www.cacb.uscourts.gov>), in the "Programs and Services" section, by clicking on "Pro Bono Opportunities." We encourage you to contact one of these agencies to explore whether there might be a way for you to contribute your time and expertise to someone in need. To those of you who already volunteer or provide badly needed pro bono help in other ways, we say thank you. Your efforts help the court be more responsive to all litigants, regardless of income level and are truly appreciated.

Sincerely,

MAUREEN A. TIGHE