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## **The Bank of America Corporation Legal Department to Receive National Pro Bono Award**

On Friday, February 29, 2008, the Legal Department of Bank of America Corporation will receive the Pro Bono Institute's **2008 Laurie D. Zelon Pro Bono Award** during a reception at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC. Timothy J. Mayopoulos, Executive Vice President and General Counsel of Bank of America Corporation will accept the award on behalf of the Legal Department. The award, given each year to an individual or organization that has provided exemplary pro bono service, will be presented in conjunction with the Institute's 2008 Pro Bono Seminar and Forum on In-house Corporate Pro Bono – a global conference that brings together major law firms, corporate legal departments, and public interest and civil rights organizations to focus on joint efforts to enhance and improve pro bono service.

The award is given in recognition of Bank of America's quick and successful development of a pro bono structure that both encompasses the legal departments in several cities and includes staff at all levels throughout the legal department. Within a year of launching an enterprise-wide pro bono initiative in 2005, the legal department was able to create pro bono opportunities in locations as far-ranging as Boston, Charlotte, Chester, Columbus, Hartford, Los Angeles, Providence, San Francisco, Seattle, and Tampa. Between the first and second years of the company-wide initiative, the company's provision of legal services to those in need increased almost four-fold, from 1200 hours in 2006 to over 4600 hours in 2007.

Bank of America's provision of volunteer services, which encompasses attorneys, paralegals, and staff, is supported at the highest levels within the company. At the June 2007 launch of the company's pro bono initiative in New York, Mr. Mayopoulos noted that Bank of America, a Charter Signatory to the Corporate Pro Bono Challenge<sup>SM</sup>, had taken "a new approach designed to drive volunteerism at all levels of the department." Support for that volunteerism comes not only from the leadership of the Legal Department, but also from business groups within the company. For example, a letter signed by three business leaders within the company was sent in support of the associates in the New York Legal Department for the launch of the New York initiative. Pro Bono Institute President and CEO, Esther Lardent, who spoke at the launch, noted "The degree of support for Bank of America's well-structured and broad-based pro bono efforts at the highest levels of the Legal Department and the company itself is impressive." Ms. Lardent pointed out that the company's general counsel and New York Pro Bono Committee Chair not only attended the pro bono initiative launch, but also spoke regarding their experiences with, and support for, pro bono.

The company's pro bono efforts include both group projects and individual pro bono work and has resulted in wills for cancer patients in Atlanta, legal services for survivors of domestic violence in New York, assistance to low-income micro-entrepreneurs in New York,

representation on FEMA appeals for Hurricane Katrina survivors, preparation of employee handbooks for a charitable organization, and advocacy for children. Many of the company's pro bono efforts support local organizations in areas where the Legal Department has offices. The company also leverages strategic partnerships with law firms and public interest organizations to maximize the impact of its pro bono work, including Greenberg Traurig LLP, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, the Neighborhood Entrepreneur Law Project, Davis, Polk & Wardwell, Shearman & Sterling LLP, and Sanctuary for Families, Inc.

Over the past year, Bank of America's Pro Bono Committee has developed a pro bono policy, created a web page on the Legal Department's intranet, and resolved several of the issues that may deter in-house legal staff seeking to do pro bono work, including malpractice insurance, time constraints, and skill sets/opportunity matching. While speaking to the New York Legal Department, Mr. Mayopoulos noted the many reasons to do pro bono work, including the fact that pro bono promotes teamwork and professional growth. He also observed that pro bono is consistent with the company's commitment to corporate social responsibility.

#### **About the Laurie D. Zelon Pro Bono Award.**

The Laurie D. Zelon Pro Bono Award honors the legal leadership of Laurie D. Zelon, Associate Justice of the California Court of Appeal and one of the originators of the Institute's Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge<sup>SM</sup>. Justice Zelon has been a long-time member and served as Chair of the California Commission on Access to Justice, and she is an active member of several statewide judicial committees addressing administration of justice issues.

#### **About the Pro Bono Institute**

Established in 1996, PBI is a non-profit organization mandated to explore and identify new approaches to the poor and disadvantaged unable to secure legal assistance to address critical problems. In doing so, the Institute identifies and develops innovative programs and undertakes rigorous evaluations to ensure that these new approaches are workable and effective. The Institute administers a number of projects designed to enhance access to justice, including: the Law Firm Pro Bono Project; the Corporate Pro Bono Project; Second Acts; Global Pro Bono; and the Reinventing Pro Bono Project for public interest organizations.