

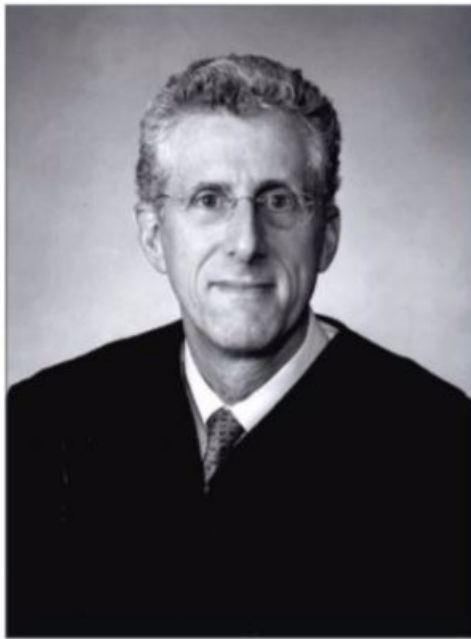


# New *Pro Bono* Opportunities at VLSP

by Vicki Jacobs



Vicki Jacobs is the Managing Attorney of the Voluntary Legal Services Program. She can be contacted at [vjacobs@vlsp.org](mailto:vjacobs@vlsp.org).



Judge Steven Gevercer

Two new volunteer-based projects for attorneys in the Sacramento area are being launched in the first quarter of 2017 by the Voluntary Legal Services Program. VLSP is tasked with providing *pro bono* opportunities for attorneys to provide free legal services to low income residents of the Sacramento region who would otherwise be unable to afford the assistance of counsel. VLSP, a nonprofit corporation, celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2016 and is a joint project of the SCBA and Legal Services of Northern California.

The first new project is the Probate Court *Pro Bono* Panel. This project, proposed by Judge Steven Gevercer of the Sacramento County Superior Court's Probate Department, calls for attorneys to provide two types of services *pro bono*: (1) representation for petitioners seeking guardianships of the person, and (2) representation in

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summary probate proceedings. Judge Gevercer has observed that many self-represented litigants struggle with the requirements of seeking relief in these proceedings and turned to the probate bar for help in assuring access to justice. The project already has recruited over 50 lawyers to represent low income litigants in Probate Court guardianship cases—cases which involve family matters, often tragic in nature, affecting our most vulnerable and needy children.

VLSP was asked to participate in this project by interviewing prospective clients, making referrals, and providing training and mentors for attorneys new to these particular proceedings. An MCLE guardianship training took place in January for our volunteers. We are grateful to Julia Kaufman, staff attorney for the Probate Court, for her excellent presentation on this topic. We are also grateful to the Probate and Estate Planning Section of the SCBA for its sponsorship of the lunch provided at the training, along with the materials provided to the attendees.

The second new project is the Estate Planning Clinic. This project has been spearheaded by attorney Jeff Gal-

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vin of Downey Brand LLP and is being jointly sponsored by the SCBA Probate and Estate Planning Section, the Sacramento Estate Planning Council, and VLSP. A volunteer committee, chaired by Galvin, has been planning a monthly clinic where low income individuals will be able to obtain a Will, an Advance Health Care Directive, and a Power of Attorney for property management. The clinic will be held on the first Monday evening of every month at VLSP. Attendees will first listen to an informative presentation about estate planning. Each participant will then meet with an attorney volunteer to discuss the preparation of his or her estate plan. Those who are ready to finalize these basic documents can do so that evening; otherwise, they can return the next month to get their documents prepared. Volunteers from the Sacramento Valley Paralegal Association will be on hand to notarize documents as needed.

Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in the planning of these two new projects. If you are interested in finding out more about these volunteer opportunities, please email VLSP Managing Attorney Vicki Jacobs at [vlsp@vlsp.org](mailto:vlsp@vlsp.org). ✍️