



## **Rural Justice Pro Bono Collaborative Launched in Response to Meeting with Vice President Biden**

**Palo Alto, Calif. – May 20, 2013** – OneJustice and Cooley LLP, in collaboration with other Bay Area law firms and legal service providers, have launched the Bay Area Rural Justice Collaborative. The Collaborative held its first free immigration clinic on May 17, 2013 in Napa, California. The Collaborative was developed to meet the goals of the Association of Pro Bono Counsel's (APBCo) IMPACT Project. The APBCo IMPACT ("Involving More Pro Bono Attorneys in Our Communities Together") Project is taking root in eight urban centers, from the San Francisco Bay Area to New York and beyond. The objective of the IMPACT Project is to design innovative and sustainable new solutions that will increase access to free legal services by utilizing pro bono volunteers.

The IMPACT Project is a direct response to a meeting held in Washington, DC in 2012 among Vice President Joe Biden, APBCo board members and senior management of the board members' firms. The meeting focused on issues of access to justice and the role of pro bono attorneys in the delivery of legal services to the poor, including innovative collaborations between law firms and legal services organizations. As a result of this conversation, APBCo initiated the IMPACT Project, a long-term project to develop new collaborations across the country to expand pro bono resources and inspire new pro bono projects.

The Rural Justice Collaborative is the first IMPACT project to launch. Its mission is to expand access to legal services in rural and/or isolated communities throughout the Bay Area. The May 17<sup>th</sup> clinic in Napa, the first of eleven free clinics set to be held over the next three months (in Napa, Half Moon Bay and Gilroy), focused on immigration. Subsequent clinics will focus on either immigration or housing issues. The clinics will utilize trained pro bono volunteers from the participating law firms, who will be supervised by experienced legal services staff attorneys. The Collaborative is staffed by a newly hired senior staff attorney at OneJustice. Initial funding and administrative support for the project has been provided by Cooley LLP.

"Those in need in rural areas simply do not have the same access to free legal services that people in urban areas do," said Julia Wilson, Executive Director of OneJustice. "The Rural Justice Collaborative is our response to try to meet this need and to address Vice President Biden's goal to create innovative and sustainable new solutions that will increase access to free legal services."

"Rural legal aid organizations have a very real need for financial resources and personnel," said Maureen Alger, Cooley's Pro Bono Partner. "It is truly an honor to be able to contribute the

resources needed to make the Collaborative a reality and to make access to legal representation a reality in these communities.”

In addition to OneJustice, participating legal services organizations include AIDS Legal Referral Panel; Alameda County Bar Association – VLSC; Asian Law Alliance; Asian Law Caucus; Bay Area Legal Aid; Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto; Justice & Diversity Center of the Bar Association of San Francisco; Law Foundation of Silicon Valley; Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area; Legal Aid of Marin; Legal Aid of Napa Valley; Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center; Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County; and Swords to Plowshares.

In addition to Cooley, participating law firms include Baker McKenzie; Bingham McCutchen; Covington & Burling; DLA Piper; Fenwick & West; Lowenstein Sandler; Morrison & Foerster and Perkins Coie.

### **About APBCo**

The Association of Pro Bono Counsel (“APBCo”) is a membership organization of full-time pro bono counsel and coordinators at major commercial law firms. APBCo has over 125 members from more than 85 law firms nationwide, including many AmLaw 200 firms. Founded in 2006, APBCo is dedicated to improving access to justice by advancing the model of the full-time law firm pro bono counsel, enhancing the professional development of pro bono counsel, and serving as a unified voice for the national law firm pro bono community.

### **About Cooley LLP**

Cooley's 700 attorneys have an entrepreneurial spirit and deep, substantive experience, and are committed to solving clients' most challenging legal matters. From small companies with big ideas to international enterprises with diverse legal needs, Cooley has the breadth of legal resources to enable companies of all sizes to seize opportunities in today's global marketplace. The firm represents clients across a broad array of dynamic industry sectors, including technology, life sciences, venture capital, clean energy, real estate and retail.

The firm has full-service offices in eleven major business and technology centers: Boston, MA; Broomfield, CO; Los Angeles, CA; New York, NY; Palo Alto, CA; Reston, VA; San Diego, CA; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; Washington, DC; and Shanghai, China.

### **About OneJustice**

OneJustice brings life-changing legal help to Californians in need. Millions of low-income veterans, seniors, families, and others face legal barriers to basic life necessities such as food, clean water, safe housing, freedom from violence, and access to medical care, education, and jobs. OneJustice supports a statewide network of nonprofit legal organizations, law firms, law schools, and businesses that work together to provide free legal assistance to hundreds of