

Mitch Kamin Co-Authors Article on California State Bar’s Mandatory Pro Bono Service Requirements

In the article, “Mandatory Pro Bono Is Not The Answer For Practitioners” published by Law360, Principal Mitch Kamin discusses the State Bar of California’s decision to mandate 50 hours of pro bono services as a requirement for new admissions.

While the mandate is admirable, California attorneys are concerned the policy will soon include admitted lawyers as a condition to renew their license. With funds for legal services at its lowest and the voiceless population continuing to grow, the needs of the poor will not be met.

The State Bar mandated pro bono services “will create enormous pressures on our already strained system of delivery of legal aid to the poor, and counter-intuitively, will result in less and lower quality legal services to those who need them most,” said Mr. Kamin. Larger law firms who have a pro bono system already in place will be able to meet the 50 hour requirement with ease, however smaller firms and young attorneys may struggle to obtain this goal due to a lack of physical and financial resources.

The alternative to creating a chore for attorneys who are unwilling to take on pro bono work, Mr. Kamin suggests the State Bar incorporate a “civil Gideon”, which would “guarantee the appointment of paid counsel, not just for criminal defendants, but also for civil litigants facing the loss of life’s basic necessities, such as housing, demanding that our entire society embrace the principles that make access to justice such a critical component of our democracy.”