

# Neil Haight Pro Bono Award

This memorial award is named in honor of Neil Haight, the Executive Director of Montana Legal Services Association for more than 30 years.

Through Neil's leadership, MLSA survived numerous attacks during his many years at its helm. His effort left a solid foundation which eventually led to the current MLSA structure as a statewide law firm. His optimism carried MLSA staff through the darkest years when many thought all hope of civil legal assistance to the poor was lost. Despite numerous and endless attacks, Neil never lost faith in the vision and goal of MLSA.

After his retirement in 2002, Neil remained the icon of MLSA until his death in 2008. His passion for justice and his compassion for Montanans living in poverty was a model many lawyers, both within and outside MLSA, in those early years of "legal aid" in Montana.

The Neil Haight Pro Bono Award recognizes a person who exemplifies Neil's legacy of providing outstanding legal services to Montanans living in poverty. The nominee is a lawyer, other individual or organization which has provided pro bono services to those in need in Montana. While the nominee may be a lawyer who has provided direct pro bono legal representation, he or she may also be a court employee, paralegal, psychologist, or social worker who has provided pro bono services in aid of direct pro bono legal representation in Montana.

Nominations are also accepted for law firms, teams of lawyers, and associations of Montana lawyers and pro bono programs receiving no form of compensation or academic credit for doing pro bono work and whose work was not a non-legal public service.

Attorney nominees must be admitted to practice in Montana. Nominees cannot be employees of organizations which provide free or low-cost services to the poor.

The Neil Haight Pro Bono Award is conferred periodically after review of all nominations, by the State Bar Justice Initiatives Committee. Individual or organizations which submit the nomination may submit more than one nominee.

**In honoring Neil, the recipient of this award should demonstrate some of the following:**

- a. *be a dedicated, committed leader instrumental in the delivery of civil legal services to Montanans living in poverty; or*
- b. *be a key person in the development of a pro bono program for a bar association or community organization; or*
- c. *contribute significant work toward creating new and innovative approaches to delivery of volunteer civil legal assistance through a new or existing pro bono program sponsored by a bar association; or*
- d. *perform significant and meaningful civil pro bono activity which resulted in satisfying previously unmet needs or extending services to underserved segments of the population; and/or*
- e. *Successfully litigated pro bono civil cases which favorably resulted in the provision of other services to Montanans living in poverty.*

## **Nominee Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Nominator Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **On separate pages, please describe the following:**

- 1) Please describe the ways in which the nominee has provided outstanding pro bono services. This may include a compelling case that the nominee assisted with or litigated on a pro bono basis. Alternatively, this may include a history of dedication to the pro bono cause including expansion of pro bono effort in an under-served area, a willingness to continually accept pro bono work or difficult cases on a pro bono basis, or some other qualitative improvement to legal services for Montanans in need. If possible, please quantify the nominee's pro bono contribution by detailing the approximate number of hours donated or the number of cases in which he or she is or was involved. Please be comprehensive in your response, including details of the

individual's or organization's work which mirrors Neil Height's dedication to pro bono.

- 2) Please briefly describe the nominee's professional career including a history of dedication to serving the under-served in Montana.

Nominations and supporting documents will not be returned. Send them no later than June 13, 2025 to:

Neil Haight Pro Bono Award  
Justice Initiatives Committee  
PO Box 577  
Helena, MT 59624  
or email  
[rmercado@montanabar.org](mailto:rmercado@montanabar.org)