16th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
37W777 Route 38
St. Charles, IL 60175

Office of the Chief Judge Robert K. Villa

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Rochford Joins Kane County in Honoring Pro Bono Attorneys

For Immediate Release

November 3, 2025

St. Charles, IL — October 29, 2025 — The 16th Judicial Circuit, along with the Kane County Bar Foundation and the Kane County Bar Association, held a ceremony to recognize local attorneys for dedicating their time to offering free legal assistance for Kane County residents. The event took place in St. Charles and highlighted the efforts of individuals providing vital services to those facing legal challenges.

Distinguished guests included Illinois Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Rochford and 23rd Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Bradley Waller, who joined 16th Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Robert Villa, Judge Divya Sarang, and Judge Kimberly DiGiovanni in honoring Kane County attorneys for collectively donating 1,058 hours of volunteer legal work this year.

Justice Rochford praised the award recipients and other volunteers, emphasizing that their work helps uphold confidence in the justice system. In her congratulatory speech, Justice Rochford stated, “Each of you is a model in our legal and social communities, and together—one human being at a time—we are advancing the public’s confidence in our justice system.”

Justice Rochford also shared her personal connection to pro bono efforts, underscoring the importance of supporting individuals beyond courtroom settings. “Providing access to justice has probably been the most vexing, the most humbling, and the most satisfying exercise of my career,” she stated. “We are serving human beings, many of whom are facing the greatest challenges of their lifetime.”

During the event, three Kane County attorneys received individual awards for their service: Laura Conroy, 2024 Pro Bono Award (delayed a year); Peter Follenweider, 2025 Pro Bono Award; and Shelly Johnson, Pro Bono Impact Award.

Each award recipient was recognized with a monetary prize and a plaque acknowledging their commitment to expanding access to legal aid. The recognition program is funded by the Illinois Supreme Court Access to Justice Improvement Grant, which also provides for cash awards.
Pro bono work, as defined under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756(f), includes providing free legal services to individuals of limited means or to organizations that serve them. With one-third of Illinois residents living in or near poverty, the need for volunteer legal assistance remains significant.

Since 1998, Kane County has annually celebrated pro bono service, starting with a gala hosted by the Kane County Bar Association. In 2012, the Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center began organizing pro bono open houses and brunches to honor volunteers and promote involvement.

The Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center offers various free services, including legal information sessions, client consultations, and assistance with family law, driver's licenses, and other legal matters at local libraries.

Pro Bono Legal Assistance in Kane County

The Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center offers free programs in partnership with local attorneys and organizations, including Prairie State Legal Services and Administer Justice.

Lawyer in the Law Library

• Divorce and Family Law Help (Walk-In): Mondays, 8:30–10:30 a.m. (Spanish interpreter available)
• Divorce and Family Law Help (Call-In): Thursdays, 11 a.m.–12 p.m.
• Driver's Privilege Clinic: First Wednesdays, 3–5 p.m. (in partnership with the Kane County Bar Association)

Lawyer in the Public Library

Volunteer attorneys provide 15-minute consultations, legal coaching, document review, eFiling assistance, and referrals.
• Aurora Public Library District, Santori Library: Second Thursdays, 6–7:30 p.m. (Spanish interpreter available)
• Gail Borden Public Library (Elgin): Fourth Thursdays, 6–7:30 p.m. (Spanish interpreter available)

Learn more at:

Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center – https://www.kclawlibrary.org/
Kane County Bar Association – https://www.kanecountybar.org/

Photo by James Harvey Photography with permission
Left to Right: 16th Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Robert Villa, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Rochford, 23rd Judicial Circuit chief Judge Bradley Waller

Photo by James Harvey Photography with permission
Left to Right: Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center Director Hallē Eichert, IL Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Rochford, Kane County Attorney Shelly Johnson, 16th Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Robert Villa

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Contact:

Alana Policastro, Judicial Assistant

Phone: 630-232-3440

Email: PolicastroAlana@16thCircuit.IllinoisCourts.gov