



Supreme Court of Illinois

April 1, 2025

SUPREME COURT APPROVES 3 PROPOSALS IMPACTING THE PRACTICE OF LAW IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois Supreme Court and the Supreme Court Executive Committee on the Practice of Law (Executive Committee) announced today the adoption of three proposals to amend and create new rules that will impact the practice of law and help to address unmet legal needs in Illinois.

The first proposal, Regulation of Intermediary Connecting Services, will regulate attorney participation in intermediary connecting service (ICS) entities. The second proposal, New Supreme Court Rule 300, will create a new Supreme Court Rule governing attorney's fee petitions. The third proposal, MCLE for Pro Bono Pilot Project, will create a two-year pilot project to allow MCLE credit for pro bono service.

Each of the proposals will take effect on July 1, 2025.

The Executive Committee worked extensively with numerous groups including the Illinois Attorney Registration & Disciplinary Commission (ARDC), the Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility (CPR), the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA), the Chicago Bar Foundation (CBF), and the Illinois MCLE Board. These stakeholders had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposals and their feedback helped to achieve a wide breadth of consensus. Each proposal furthers the Committee's charge to provide recommendations to the Supreme Court regarding issues impacting the practice of law and unmet legal needs.

"I would like to thank the Executive Committee, bar groups and Supreme Court committees and commissions for their hard work in researching and proposing these changes to the practice of law," Chief Justice Mary Jane Theis said. "The practice of law is experiencing profound change in the areas of technology and access to justice and these updates are necessary to address them."

ICS entities are organizations which connect lawyers to clients, typically through the internet. ICSs are already in operation and have the potential to help address unmet legal needs by making it easier for consumers to find a lawyer. It was determined, however, that existing rules did not clearly address lawyer participation in an ICS, creating confusion and making some lawyers reluctant to participate. As a result, the Executive Committee proposed amendments to Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct 1.6 and 7.2 to define "intermediary connecting service" and permit attorneys to participate in an ICS when certain conditions are met. With these changes, attorneys must engage in due diligence before and while participating in an ICS to ensure that the ICS is complying with certain requirements. This due diligence can be accomplished via an annual ICS certification letter.

“The Illinois Supreme Court has been a leader in exploring ways to practice law with an eye towards meeting the unmet legal needs of Illinois residents,” said Attorney J. Timothy Eaton, who serves as Chair of the Executive Committee.

New Supreme Court Rule 300 Governing Attorney’s Fee Petitions is intended to encourage alternative fee agreements (which increase access to legal services by making the cost of services more affordable, predictable, and transparent) by clearly establishing that an alternative fee agreement may be the basis for an attorney’s fee petition and that hourly billing records will be required only under circumstances set forth in the rule. This new rule will provide greater consistency in the presentation and consideration of fee petitions and is ultimately intended to enhance the affordability and accessibility of legal services.

The MCLE for Pro Bono Pilot Project temporarily amends Supreme Court Rule 795(d) and creates a two-year pilot project wherein Illinois attorneys can receive Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit for providing pro bono legal assistance through Illinois Free Legal Answers, a virtual, internet-based legal advice clinic administered by the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI). This program will allow an attorney to earn 1 hour of MCLE credit for every 2 hours of pro bono participation in Illinois Free Legal Answers, up to 5 credits per 2-year MCLE reporting period. PILI and the Executive Committee will regularly review the data during the pilot period to determine whether CLE credit increases volunteerism and adds value to the legal profession by expanding professional development, and most importantly, the pilot will provide a demonstrable framework for how to broaden initiatives to help people most in need.

The Executive Committee was created in 2023 and consists of 13 members appointed by the Supreme Court, including representatives from the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, the Illinois Board of Admissions to the Bar, the Commission on Professionalism, the Committee on Professional Responsibility, the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, and the MCLE Board. Eaton, a partner in the Taft Law Firm, serves as Chair with Tim Bertschy as Vice-Chair.

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