

New Law School Graduates Turn To Public Interest Work

2009-08-25 11:02:05

Philadelphia legal services groups benefit from the slowing economy – they're excited that many freshly minted young lawyers have some free time on their hands to help out their causes.

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Law grads headed for public-interest work

By Chris Mondics

Legal-services groups that represent Philadelphia's poorest citizens are readying themselves for an unexpected windfall – the arrival of newly minted law school graduates whose start dates at big law firms have been pushed back and who will spend a year practicing public-interest law.

Leaders of these organizations say the arrival of the new lawyers could not have come at a better time. Foundations have reduced their grants, as have other supporters, in response to the nation's economic downturn, so legal groups have been scrambling to staff cases.

During the next several weeks, a half-dozen or more new law-school graduates will be joining their staffs.

Effectively, they will be compensated by the law firms that hired them and then pushed back their starting dates. But their paychecks will be far less than what they would have earned had they started on schedule at the firms.

The firms are seeking to trim their costs in response to a decline in revenue after last fall's economic collapse, and that has been a boon to public-interest legal groups.