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Taking legal services to the Web: Rice Law helps clients save costs in economic downturn

10 February 2009 — Wilmington, NC — Rice Law, PLLC announced this week that it is now offering unbundled legal services throughout the State of North Carolina.

"Some clients tell me they simply can't afford to address their family law problems in the current economy. In fact, some families approach bankruptcy at the conclusion of their lawsuit," says Mark Spencer Williams, the firm's managing member.

There are two approaches to client representation: traditional full service and unbundled services. Traditional full service is provided when an attorney is available to a client to fill multiple roles such as case evaluation, providing professional legal advice, coaching, negotiating, drafting legal documents, researching case law, writing legal briefs, conducting discovery, and representing the client in court, at mediations, and in depositions.

According to the American Bar Association, some individuals could not otherwise afford the services of an attorney without unbundling. The North Carolina State Bar has issued an ethics opinion that it is ethical to provide unbundled services under certain circumstances; see N.C. State Bar, 2005 Formal Ethics Opinion 10.

With unbundled services, Rice Law clients now have better communication concerning their legal matter through 24/7 secure-encrypted Web-based access to a Virtual Law Office that includes their private documents, calendar of events, threaded attorney-client discussions, and more. Williams says, "The technology enables us to significantly reduce the costs of providing legal services while helping a client resolve some family law disputes with a Separation Agreement and Property Settlement online."

Charles E. Rice, III, the firm's namesake and a former Chief District Court judge, marvels at the advances in technology. When he began his practice almost thirty-eight years ago, he and other attorneys walked blocks to make a single copy. "Now, clients have their copies in real-time and are fully aware of what is happening at every stage of the litigation," Rice says.

Stephanie Kimbro, owner of Virtual Law Office Technology, the software firm contracted by Rice Law, says, "There are currently three firms in North Carolina using the VLOTech software and Rice Law is the largest firm that focuses on family law."

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About Rice Law, PLLC

Rice Law, PLLC provides legal counsel in the areas of family and education law. Our attorneys provide full-service representation of clients in Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender counties. The firm now provides online legal services throughout the State of North Carolina. For more information, visit www.ricefamilylaw.com.

About Virtual Law Office Technology, LLC

Virtual Law Office Technology, LLC (VLOTech) was founded with the purpose of providing a secure, software as a service, Web-based product that connects solo and small firm law practices with the online consumer through unbundled, online legal services. For more information, visit <http://www.vlotech.com>.