



## Access to Justice Headlines

November 17, 2008

New at [www.ATJsupport.org](http://www.ATJsupport.org)

**New Funding for Arizona Legal Aid Programs from Pro Hac Vice Rule.** The Arizona Supreme Court has amended its rule allowing out-of-state lawyers to practice on a limited basis, increasing the pro hac vice fee by 15 percent. The additional revenue will be distributed by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education to fund organizations providing civil legal services.

**Minnesota State Bar Association Resolution in Support of Legal Aid.** The Minnesota State Bar Association has adopted a resolution affirming its support for pro bono and public interest work. The resolution comes in response to a joint report by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Inspector General and Office of Professional Responsibility finding that many lawyers were likely rejected for prestigious DOJ appointments due to affiliations with various public interest organizations or activities deemed politically suspect, including Minnesota legal aid and public defender programs. The Bar opposes attempts to define public service as ideological, and states its opposition to employment practices by government agencies that may discourage this work.

**Chief Justices and Court Administrators Access to Justice Resolution.** At their joint annual meeting, the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators adopted a resolution supporting court leadership in ensuring access to civil justice.

**ABA President's Blog on Access to Justice.** ABA President Tommy Wells is maintaining a web log in which he discusses events and activities relating to access to justice, diversity, the rule of law, and the independence of the bar and judiciary, the areas on which he is focusing during his presidency.

**Report on Legal Aid Salaries.** According to the 2008 Public Sector and Public Interest Attorney Salary Report issued by the National Association for Law Placement (NALP), civil legal aid lawyers are still the lowest paid in the profession. The median entry-level salary for a legal services attorney is \$40,000; at 11-15 years of experience, the median is \$60,000. The 2008 Associate Salary Survey, a companion report by NALP, shows that the median salary for a fifth-year associate ranges from \$99,000 to \$183,000 depending on firm size.

**West Virginia Incoming Chief Justice Remarks on Access to Justice.** State Supreme Court Justice Brent Benjamin spoke at a luncheon sponsored by Legal Aid of West Virginia of his plans to focus on expanding access to civil justice during his upcoming year as Chief Justice.

**District of Columbia Legal Needs Report.** On October 7, the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission released *Justice for All? An Examination of the Civil Legal Needs of the District of Columbia's Low-Income Community*. The report reviews legal needs in nine areas of law (consumer, education, employment, estate planning, family, public benefits, health/disability, housing, and immigration) and the legal services network's capacity to meet those needs. It provides ten recommendations to improve the provision of civil legal services to the District's low-income residents.

**New Montana State Bar Equal Justice Award.** The Montana State Bar has created a new award to be given annually to a judge for efforts to expand access to justice. The new award is named in honor of retiring Chief Justice Karla Gray, who is its first recipient. This is the Montana State Bar's first award for judicial efforts.

**Civil Right to Counsel E-Newsletter.** The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel has released its new quarterly e-newsletter, covering advocacy efforts toward a civil right to counsel. The inaugural October 2008 issue and information on free subscription are available at [www.civilrighttocounsel.org/news/newsletter](http://www.civilrighttocounsel.org/news/newsletter) (link available from [www.ATJsupport.org](http://www.ATJsupport.org)).

**New Maryland Access to Justice Commission.** The Maryland Access to Justice Commission, chaired by retired Court of Appeals Judge Irma Raker, held its first meeting on October 20, with New Hampshire Chief Justice John Broderick, Jr., as keynote speaker. Executive Director Pamela Cardullo Ortiz joins the Commission from her prior position as Executive Director of Family Administration at the Administrative Office of the Courts.

**National Pro Bono Celebration.** A national week-long celebration of pro bono is scheduled for October 25-31, 2009. Advisory Committee members for the event include state Bar Presidents, state Chief Justices, past and present ABA leaders, law school Deans, law firms, and the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service. Thirty law firms, bar associations and pro bono programs across the country have signed up to host events thus far.

**California Pro Bono Summit.** A strategic planning event on pro bono was co-sponsored on November 6 by the State Bar's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services and the Public Interest Clearinghouse. Over sixty law firm pro bono partners and coordinators participated in sessions on family law, rural delivery, coordination and best practices. Working groups were established to implement the ideas generated at the Summit.

**South Carolina Access to Justice Hearings.** The South Carolina Access to Justice Commission has completed a series of statewide hearings on barriers to civil justice, culminating in a final hearing at the state Supreme Court on November 5. South Carolina Public Broadcasting will air a television and a radio show based on the hearings on December 11. Initial findings address access issues and offer recommendations in the following areas: legal services, self-represented litigants, domestic relations, communication, and foreclosures. The state Supreme Court has already approved a divorce packet for self-represented litigants and signage for Clerk of Court's offices setting forth what clerks can and cannot do for self-represented litigants.

**ABA *Judges Journal* Second Special Issue on Access to Justice.** The Fall issue of the *ABA Judges Journal* continues the special focus of the Summer issue on Access to justice issues. It includes an article on creating a culture of support for legal aid by Deborah Hankinson, Chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants; a case study of the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission by Chair Peter Edelman; and a report on efforts to help self-represented litigants in Wisconsin by Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson. Some articles are available online and the full issue may be downloaded by ABA Judicial Division members.

**Petition for Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission.** The Wisconsin Supreme Court will consider in mid-December a petition from the Wisconsin State Bar to create an Access to Justice Commission. The petition incorporated the State Bar's Access to Justice Study Committee Report, which found that approximately 80 percent of households with a legal need go without legal assistance. The proposed Commission would be made up of 17 members appointed by the Court.

**Minnesota Campaign Supporting Court Funding, Legal Aid, and Public Defenders.** The Minnesota State Bar Association, the state courts, legal aid providers and public defenders have joined forces to lobby for funding necessary to keep the state justice system intact in the face of a looming state budget deficit. The Bar Association has created a new networking site for attorneys, "1000supporters.org" to keep them informed of developments on the justice system during the legislative session.

*All items are posted at [www.ATJsupport.org](http://www.ATJsupport.org). For additional information, contact Bob Echols, ABA Center for Access to Justice Initiatives, [echols@suscom-maine.net](mailto:echols@suscom-maine.net).*