



Louisiana Access to Justice Commission

10 am on Friday, May 14, 2021

Attendees

Mary Barrios, Board Member, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services; Private Practitioner
Alan Brackett, Vice President, Louisiana Bar Foundation; Mouldoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett
Amanda Brown, Executive Director, Lagniappe Law Lab
Hon. Jeffrey Cashe, Judge, 21st Judicial District Court
Brandi Cole, Associate General Counsel, Lumen Technologies
Jeff Coreil, NeunerPate; ATJ Commission Co-Chair
Jennifer Eagan, Liaison Counsel to District Judges, Louisiana Supreme Court
Ann Gregorie, Executive Director, Baton Rouge Bar Association
C.C. Kahr, Executive Director, Pro Bono Project New Orleans
Christy Kane, Pro Bono Counsel, Entergy of Louisiana
Greg Landry, Executive Director, Acadiana Legal Service Corp.
Virginia Listach, Director, Southern University Law Center Legal Clinic
Alainna Mire, 2020-2021 LSBA President; City of Alexandria
Luz Molina, Clinic Professor, Loyola College of Law
Chris Ralston, President, Louisiana Bar Foundation; Phelps Dunbar
Deidre Robert, Treasurer, Louisiana Bar Foundation; Executive Counsel for Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
Veronica Sizer, Executive Counsel, Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness
Sandra Vujnovich, Judicial Administrator, Louisiana Supreme Court
Adrienne Wheeler, Executive Director, Louisiana Appleseed
Hon. Lisa Woodruff-White, Judge, East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court

Guests

Nora Ahmed, Legal Director, ACLU of Louisiana
Clare Boone, Legal Intern, ACLU of Louisiana
Raul Esquivel, Executive Counsel, Office of Chief Justice John L. Weimer
Radiance Mack, ATJ Developing Leadership Intern
Judy Perry Martinez, ABA Immediate Past President

Staff:

Stephanie Beagh, Access to Justice Projects Counsel
Mariarenee Contreras, Access to Justice Projects Counsel
Amy Duncan, Access to Justice Training and Projects Counsel
Jordan Maier, Access to Justice Assistant
Rachael Mills, Access to Justice Projects Counsel
Monte Mollere, Access to Justice Director

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- I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Jeff Coreil welcomed the group.
- II. **Consent Calendar** – The consent calendar was approved as written.
- III. **Rural Access to Justice** – ABA Immediate Past President Judy Perry Martinez shared the [2020 ABA Profile of the Legal Profession](#), which in part reported on how the lack of access to legal representation in rural areas impacts access to justice. She noted that there are 1.3 million lawyers in America, but they are not evenly dispersed and tend to cluster in city centers. This means that while on paper there are about 4 lawyers for every 1,000 residents, actual accessibility varies heavily by county. Of 3,100 counties in America, 54 have no attorneys, while 182 counties have only one or two. In Louisiana, attorneys are clustered in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette, with vast gaps everywhere else.

Judy also noted the work that some states are doing to remedy this gap. For example, in South Dakota, Pat Goetzinger successfully advocated for the passage of HB 2036 in 2013, which allocates state funds for incentive payments to lawyers who open or join a practice in rural areas. Judy urged the Commission to consider the ABA a resource when assessing what solutions can be implemented in Louisiana.

IV. **Louisiana Bar Foundation Report**

- **Grants:** Alan Brackett reported that the LBF approved \$6.3 million in grants to annual grantees at the board meeting on April 23. In total, the LBF plans to grant just under \$8 million this year.
- **LRAP:** The LBF continues to work with the law schools to unify the LRAP programs funded by the Kendall Vick Public Law Fund. Tulane joined the program this year, which will relaunch October 1, 2021.
- **2021 Gala:** Deidre Robert reported that the LBF held its 35th Annual Gala on April 23, where they recognized honorees from this year and last year.
- **Government Funding:** At the board meeting, members approved a contract for a “justice in government launch package” aimed at assisting the LBF in accessing government funding. The LBF is also hiring a grants and gifts associate to work with those consultants on the project.
- **Fellows Class Project:** The current Fellows class project, Connecting Legal Needs to Education, is underway and aims to educate the Fellows Class about the unrealized legal needs of Louisiana’s low-income communities as well as the efforts being made to provide information and resources to those falling within this “Justice Gap”. The project highlights the Civil Legal Navigator, and the Fellows will work closely with Louisiana Appleseed and Lagniappe Law Lab to expand the Navigator’s content library.
- **Communications:** The LBF continues to collaborate with Spitfire to roll out a policymaker education plan, most recently reaching out to members of the judiciary and legislature regarding the need for increased funding for civil legal aid.

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- **Speak Out for Justice Project:** The LBF has engaged two writers to produce four short stories on civil legal aid outcomes, and a videographer to produce three 30-second PSAs to be aired throughout Louisiana. New proposals will be accepted in summer 2021.

V. Legislative Updates

- IFP** – Jeff Coreil reported that HB 108, which updates and clarifies statutes related to *in forma pauperis*, passed through the Civil Law Committee unanimously.
- Notarial services by clerks of court for domestic violence survivors** – Adrienne Wheeler reported that HB 55 passed the House floor with 93 in favor and 1 against, and with no opposition from the executive director of the Clerks of Court Association. The bill provides that a petition for a TRO only require a written affirmation, rather than a notarized affidavit. The legislative committee of the LSBA did not take a position on the bill, as some committee members were concerned from a technical standpoint about including a criminal-type sanction in the code of civil procedure.
- Child Support Payments and Incarcerated Parents Brochure** – Amy Duncan presented the brochure developed by the Building Bridges Committee, DOC, and DCFS to educate advocates on legislative changes to recently enacted legislation. The brochure explains how incarcerated parents can have their child support obligations modified to accurately reflect their incarcerated status and lack of income.

VI. ATJ Commission Committees

- Funding Committee** – Chris Ralston reported on the committee’s continued work on increasing civil legal aid, which includes an op ed published in the Advocate by House Appropriations Vice Chair Gary Carter, urging for an increase in the state appropriation for civil legal aid. Additionally, Adrienne Wheeler and Laura Tuggle attended an Appropriations Committee luncheon and requested the amount be raised from \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Alainna Mire reported on ABA Day 2021, which was held virtually again this year. The delegates met with staff of Senator Kennedy, Senator Cassidy, and Congressman Graves. Senator Cassidy has signed off on the letter of support for LSC in the past, but this year Senator Kennedy and Congressman Graves’ staff both expressed interest in learning more. The group hopes to set up meetings with Representatives Letlow and Carter in the near future as well.

- Technology Committee** – Jennifer Eagan reported that the committee is working with legal aid program staff to populate the new Learning Management System with onboarding materials and substantive law courses. Additionally, the committee held a strategic planning meeting on March 23 where they identified three priority projects: 1) increasing self-help kiosks at courts/community gathering spots, 2) advancing automated forms, and 3) developing the online dispute resolution program. Currently, a bill has passed in the House which provides for a pilot online dispute resolution program to be used as the default option for small claims in Slidell City Court. This platform has already been used successfully in Utah.

VII. Justice For All Project

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- a. **Communications Plan** – Alainna Mire reported on the JFA team’s recent successes in executing the communications plan. The plan objectives including securing media coverage, holding local listening sessions, and recruiting local champions for the project. So far, media coverage has included a TV story with KNOE in Monroe, the aforementioned op ed in the Advocate by Gary Carter, and an article in the Concordia Sentinel. Additionally, Alainna has presented the findings of the JFA project in the Bar Journal and at several venues, including the Disney CLE, the LSBA Board of Governors orientation, and the Shreveport Bar and Inn of Court.

Stephanie shared that the team has started meeting with local leaders to schedule community listening sessions and will travel to Concordia and East Carroll parishes in June.

- b. **Rural Civil Justice Initiatives in Other States** – Amy Duncan presented examples of ways other states’ JFA projects have tackled access to justice in rural areas, with an eye toward discussing what solutions might fit for Louisiana.
- c. **Conversation – *What models (those presented or others) might the Louisiana ATJ Commission use to address rural access in Louisiana?***
 - i. Virtual kiosks at schools, libraries, medical centers
 - ii. Increased use of paraprofessionals
 - iii. Pro Bono Legal Clinic in a Box – pro bono toolkit
 - iv. Mobile law offices based regionally
 - v. Collaboration with faith leaders

VIII. Justice Community Items

- a. **ATJ Internship** – Rachael Mills introduced Radiance Mack, a member of the 2021 ATJ Leadership Internship Class, who is a student at SULC and who is sponsored by Entergy. The program is looking for an additional sponsor for the 2022 program.
- b. **LSBA Pro Bono Awards Ceremony** – Jordan Maier invited Commission members to attend the virtual recognition ceremony scheduled for May 20, 2021, at 2:00 pm, and congratulated Chris Ralston on his David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award.

IX. Adjourn

- a. This is the final meeting of the 2020-2021 bar year. We appreciate the participation of each and every one the ATJ Commissioners. LSBA President Minor Pipes will make committee assignments in the upcoming months. Please let Monte Mollere (mmollere@lsba.org) or Jordan Maier (Jordan.maier@lsba.org) know if you would be interested in serving on the 2021-22 Louisiana Access to Justice Commission.