

LOUISIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
1:00 P.M. Thursday, October 13, 20220

Hon. Lisa Woodruff-White (ret.), Chair, East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court (retired)

Tina Suggs, Vice Chair, Frederick A. Miller & Associates

Terri Anderson-Scott, Acadiana Legal Service Corp

Carlesia Bibbins, LSBA Leadership Class

Quinn Brown, LaFleur & Laborde LLC

Ashely Caruso, LSBA Leadership Class

Carolyn Deal, LIFT Fellow

Stephen Dwyer, LSBA President

Gwendolyn Collins-Greenup, Greenup Law, LLC

Ann K. Gregorie, Baton Rouge Bar Association

Pamela Hall, LIFT Fellow

Franchesca Hamilton-Acker, Acadiana Legal Service Corp

Sarah Harbison, Pelican Institute for Public Policy

Amelia Hoppe, Emergency Legal Responders

C.C. Kahr, The Pro Bono Project

Prof. Robert Lancaster, Louisiana State University

Kathleen Legendre, Zara Zeringue, LLC

Amber Mason, LIFT Fellow

Prof. Luz Molina, Loyola University College of Law

Caitlin Morgenstern, Emergency Legal Responders

Roxanne Newman, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

Jeffrey Nicholson, Nicholson Law Firm LLC

Jeremy Nusloch, Frederick A Miller & Assoc.

Joseph Oelkers III, Acadiana Legal Service Corp

Camille Patti, Attorney at Law

Sara Pic, Law Library of Louisiana

Amy Pirtle, LSBA Leadership Class

Sachida Raman, Acadiana Legal Service Corp

Laura Reeds, Justice and Accountability Center of Louisiana

Lisa Stansky, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

Laura Tuggle, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

Jane Thomas, Attorney at Law

Josef Ventulan, Louisiana State Law Institute

Adrienne Wheeler, Louisiana Appleseed

Liz Williams, LIFT Fellow

Sharonda Williams, Loyola University New Orleans

Minutes

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Judge Lisa Woodruff-White (retired), Chair; Tina Suggs, Vice Chair; and Monte Mollere welcomed the group and new members introduced themselves.
- II. **Consent Calendar** – The consent calendar was approved as written.

LOUISIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
1:00 P.M. Thursday, October 13, 2020

- III. **Overview of Louisiana Access to Justice Community** – Monte Mollere gave an overview of the structure of the Access to Justice program, including the Commission and the Committee, and Judge Woodruff-White spoke to the economic return on investment of legal services in Louisiana. Monte Mollere gave a summary of the ATJ Committee’s participation in the LSBA strategic plan, the ATJ Commission plan, and the JFA strategic plan.
- IV. **ATJ Committee Subcommittee and Initiatives Reports**
- a. **Disaster Response**
- i. **Disaster Response Subcommittee** – Ann Gregorie reported that the subcommittee has not had to respond to any disasters this year, although this time of year has become is typically busy. The Disaster Response Subcommittee maintains the statewide ABA-YLD hotline, maintains, and updates the state disaster manual, and coordinates the response of legal stakeholders during and after a disaster.
- ii. **Disaster Law Collaboration Summit** – Laura Tuggle reported on the Disaster Law Collaboration Summit, which will be taking place November 3-4 at the Embassy Suites in Baton Rouge. The programming highlights where disaster legal response fits into the statewide disaster response program, and attendees will include both legal aid attorneys and disaster response organizations.
- b. **Pro Bono Subcommittee**
- i. **20 hours in 2022 Pro Bono Campaign** – Ann Gregorie and C.C. Kahr reported on the campaign, which asks attorneys to provide 20 hours of pro bono in 2022. It was reported that Chief Justice Weimer and the Justices sent two letters in support of the campaign. The first was to the state’s judges and the second was emailed to all Louisiana’s attorneys. An article was also included in the September edition of the LSBA’s Bar Briefs. Additionally, Rachael Mills and C.C. Kahr will be presenting at the October 18th Bridging the Gap CLE for new attorneys. Judge Woodruff-White mentioned the need for pro bono attorneys in domestic violence cases, adding that few domestic violence organizations have staff lawyers.
- ii. **Lawyers in Libraries** – Stephanie Beaugh updated Committee members on the Lawyers in Libraries week of service being held in conjunction with National Celebrate Pro Bono Week on October 24-29, 2022. During this week, volunteer attorneys will meet with patrons in libraries and over the phone for brief “Ask-A-Lawyer” consultations. Webinars on common legal issues—including tenants’ rights, divorce and child custody, disability rights, estate planning, and successions—will also be livestreamed daily on ATJ’s Lawyers in Libraries Facebook. Stephanie thanked the following Committee members and guests for volunteering. She also asked Committee members to share the schedule of events with patrons, clients, constituents, and anyone who may be interested in participating.
- c. **Initiatives**
- i. **ATJ Developing Leadership Intern Program** – Rachael Mills reported the program will celebrate eight year in 2023. The ATJ Developing Leadership Intern

LOUISIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
1:00 P.M. Thursday, October 13, 2020

program is a unique opportunity for one 1L law students from each of Louisiana's four law schools where they spend their time working with various civil legal aid organizations and district judges. This year two new sponsors have joined the program, the LSBA's Civil Law & Litigation Section and Butler Snow, LLP. Sponsoring organizations provide mentorship and a stipend to the ATJ interns during the 6-week program. Students are being recruited to apply for the internship and sponsors will select interns in March of 2023. Tina Suggs then mentioned that Dillard University is looking to do something similar to this; Tina will be in touch with Rachael Mills about this in the future.

- ii. **Public Interest Legal Training** – Mariarenee Contreras thanked Summer Justice Fridays CLE participants and reported there will be a CINC-focused three-hour CLE event on December 2 in Lafayette at Acadiana Legal Service Corporation's office. Also, the Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities Committee is hosting a Disability Law Miniseries in-person and virtually on Friday, December 16. The CLE is free and will include three hours of CLE credit, including 1 hour of ethics. The agenda includes sessions on employment discrimination, disability coverage under federal and state laws, and ethical obligations regarding special needs trusts.
- iii. **LIFT** – Amy Duncan announced the launch of two new LIFT projects, which take the program statewide through partnerships with ALSC and SLLS. Through the Disaster Title Clearing Project, operated in partnership with SLLS, LIFT Fellows Amber Mason and Paul Brazil will work to address the heirship property and title clearing needs of Hurricane Ida survivors. Through the Rural Justice Legal Incubator Project, operated in partnership with ALSC, LIFT Fellows Carolyn Deal, Pamela Hall, and Elizabeth Williams will work to provide much-needed legal representation to underserved rural areas. Sachida Raman noted the difficulty to recruit and hire attorneys in northern and central areas of Louisiana; and emphasized how more pro bono and more LIFT incubator fellows will help. Stephen Dwyer then mentioned that Loyola used to have an incubator program for first year lawyers; and he is interested in getting it running again. Stephen Dwyer will reach out to Monte Mollere after the meeting.

V. **Planning and 2022-23 Committee Goal Setting** – *information and action items* – **Judge Woodruff-White/Tina Suggs/Sachida Raman** – update on status of strategic plans and discussion of ATJ Committee projects in support of over Louisiana Justice Community efforts.

- a. **Strategic Plan** – *information item* – **Judge Woodruff White/Tina Suggs** – Judge Woodruff-White reported that over the past several years, the Committee's efforts have been guided by a series of strategic plans which have been developed in coordination with the Louisiana ATJ Commission. The strategic plan items have also defined the ongoing work of the ATJ Committee as well as other items the ATJ Committee will focus on annually. During last year's final ATJ Committee meeting we heard from the provider community regarding the issues of importance. Since that last meeting, we have reviewed the items, obtained additional input, and evaluated our resources to support these topics.

LOUISIANA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
1:00 P.M. Thursday, October 13, 2020

- b. Provider Identified Legal Issues – Judge Woodruff-White/Tina Suggs/Sachida Raman –**
Examination and prioritization of issues presented by legal aid providers:
- i. **Deferred Items**
 1. **Child Support Collection Lag Time** – Judge Woodruff-White reported that this issue will be deferred while there is personnel transitioning at DCFS.
 - ii. **Committee Action Items (Short-term/Informational)**
 1. **Gap in Services for the Elderly** – Jane Thomas reported that members previously identified a gap in services for interdictions involving low-income families and elderly family members who are no longer able to care for themselves. After investigating the issue, Jane Thomas reported that SLLS and ALSC rarely file interdictions as they generally do not have the resources. Elderly Protective Services (EPS) does not file interdictions either. EPS only files protective orders to maintain the rights of their elderly clients and refers other enquirers to resource centers. The Louisiana Guardianship Services may be court-appointed as a “curator of last resort”, but they don’t file interdictions. Laura Reeds noted the movement away from interdictions and toward the newly adopted “supportive decision making” legislation and other alternatives to legal status; she further suggested reaching out to Disability Rights Louisiana for materials and more information. It was decided that Jane Thomas, Camille Patti, Franchesca Hamilton-Acker, an SLLS designee (TBD), and possibly Melanie Bray will meet to discuss next steps. Next steps may include collecting data around need – SLLS and ALSC reported they receive many requests for assistance with interdictions. Gwendolyn Collins-Greenup also offered her assistance.
 2. **Heir Property** – Laura Tuggle reported that SLLS received funding from AARP for a disaster title clearing/heirship property/estate planning project. SLLS partnered with Appleseed to provide direct services and outreach. Specifically, Appleseed is working on community legal education guide and identifying policy issues. This complements work with the Pro Bono Project and as well as the LIFT Disaster Title Clearing Project. Appleseed is also working on an Estate Planning Guide to be disseminated statewide and integrated with the online Legal Navigator; Goodwin Proctor and LSU are assisting in drafting chapters. Sachida Raman spoke on the need for pro bono attorneys to handle cases and questioned whether there could be an “expert panel” that could assist individuals interested in taking these cases. Judge Woodruff White suggested young lawyers may be interested in learning this. C.C. Kahr offered to provide assistance in development of material for pro bono attorneys. Gwendolyn Collins-Greenup offered to help. Adrienne mentioned mediation (which legal services cannot handle) to settle internal family disputes may be another topic to examine in completion of successions.
 3. **Disaster Pro Bono Cases** – *information item* – Sachida Raman explained that fee-generating cases with negligible monetary outcomes are not being handled by the private bar and while help is sought from legal services organizations they are generally unable to handle any fee-generating cases, leaving individuals with no recourse. The ABA and Young Lawyers Division (YLD) often address the short-

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ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
1:00 P.M. Thursday, October 13, 2020

term issues, but these cases are longer term issues. He explained that it becomes a challenge to get assistance for these cases. C.C. Kahr noted that many volunteers are conflicted out and it may be necessary to seek other volunteers who are not conflicted out. Gwendolyn Collins-Greenup stated that young lawyers may be interested but do not have experience and questioned whether a “guide” may help. She suggested reaching out to the YLD. Judge Lisa Woodruff-White will talk to Josef Ventulan about getting the LSBA YLD involved.

iii. Committee Action Items (Longer-range)

1. **SRL Assistance** – As previously discussed, only a few domestic violence organizations have attorney resources and need resources for SRLs. She reported that domestic violence programs appreciated the videos created by Louisiana Appleseed to help self-represented domestic violence litigants. Sachida Raman and Judge Woodruff-White will discuss reframing the issue for discussion at the next meeting.
2. **Justice Index** – Monte Mollere suggested that with so little time left that for the next meeting we identify individuals to review the Justice Index, and there may be LSBA entities we can ask to help review this report. ATJ Staff will then work with these individuals and entities to identify whether there are issues appropriate for the ATJ Committee to work on.

VI. **Community Updates** – Members were invited to discuss any issues of relevance to themselves and the Justice Community. No items were discussed.

VII. **Adjourn**

- a. Next meeting: Jan 27, 2022, hybrid – in-person location to be determined