

Louisiana Access to Justice Committee

10:00 a.m. on Friday, March 14, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendees:

- Hon. Lisa Woodruff-White, Committee Chair, Retired Judge 19th Judicial District Court, Baton Rouge
- Roxanne Newman, Vice-Chair, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, Hammond
- Terri Anderson-Scott, Acadiana Legal Service Corp., Shreveport
- Talya Bergeron, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, Baton Rouge
- Carlesia Carmena Bibbins, LA Dept. of Health, Baton Rouge
- Franchesca Hamilton-Acker, Acadiana Legal Service Corp, Lafayette
- Amanda Huff Brown, Lagniappe Law Lab, New Orleans
- Tracy O. Joseph, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, New Orleans
- Prof. Richard Pittman, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center, Baton Rouge
- Sachida Raman, Acadiana Legal Service Corp., Lafayette
- Maggie Trahan Simar, 16th JDC Family Court, St. Martinville
- Debbie Skrmetta, Federal Bar Association, New Orleans Chapter, New Orleans,
- Lisa Stansky, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, New Orleans
- Jane Thomas, Attorney at Law, Baton Rouge
- Ranie Thompson, Disability Rights Louisiana, New Orleans
- Josef Ventulan, Louisiana State Law Institute, Baton Rouge
- Adrienne Wheeler, Louisiana Appleseed, New Orleans
- Sarah Whittington, Justice & Accountability Center of Louisiana, New Orleans
- Sharonda Williams, Loyola University New Orleans, New Orleans

Guests:

- Charles Bourque, Louisiana Bar Foundation, New Orleans
- Greg Hopkins, Acadiana Legal Service Corp., Shreveport
- Kaylin Jolivet, Leadership Class
- Libby Kiger, Leadership Class
- Virginia Listach, Southern University Law Center, Baton Rouge
- Garret Wick, Leadership Class

LSBA Staff:

- Stephanie Beagh, ATJ Projects Counsel
- Rebecca Collins, ATJ Projects Counsel
- Amy Duncan, ATJ Training & Projects Counsel
- Rachael Mills, ATJ Projects Counsel
- Monte Mollere, ATJ Director

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I. Welcome and Introduction

ATJ Committee Chair Judge Woodruff-White welcomed everyone.

II. Consent Calendar

Adoption of the Consent Calendar was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

III. Louisiana Bar Foundation Report – Charles Bourque reported that the Louisiana Bar Foundation’s 39th Annual Fellows Gala will be held on Friday, April 11, 2025, at the Four Seasons Hotel in New Orleans. The ATJ Grant awards will be announced in May 2025.

IV. Access to Justice Committee Issues and Initiatives

a. Pro Bono Subcommittee

- i. **Pro Bono Awards** – Roxanne Newman reported on the Pro Bono Awards process. She explained that the Nominating Committee reviewed all submitted nominations and developed a list of recommended award recipients. This list was then submitted to the Access to Justice Committee for ratification. The committee voted to approve the recommendations, and the motion passed with a majority of members in favor.
- b. **25 Hours in 2025 Campaign** - Rachael Mills reported that the Pro Bono Committee launched the “25 Hours in 2025” pro bono campaign, encouraging attorneys to contribute at least 25 hours of pro bono work throughout the year.
- c. **Justice on the Geaux** – Rachael Mills reported that the Justice on the Geaux Initiative tour took place January 27–31, 2025, with stops at four access points: DeRidder, Lake Providence, Ferriday, and Harrisonburg. The initiative aimed to improve legal access in underserved communities. Acadiana invited Amanda Brown to explain the access point model and other social services to share information. The tour successfully reached the target communities and received applications from individuals seeking legal assistance.
- d. **ATJ Grant Fund** – The ATJ Committee discussed the Access to Justice grant fund, recommending \$30,000 for Disability Rights Louisiana, \$15,000 for a joint application from Louisiana Appleseed and Lagniappe Law Lab, and \$5,000 for the Pro Bono Project. Disability Rights Louisiana seeks \$125,600 for legal server transition to improve case management and reporting. Louisiana Appleseed and Lagniappe Law Lab requested \$15,000 to expand their will generator application. The Pro Bono Project aims to improve its website for better user experience and security.
- e. **Disaster Response Subcommittee** – Laura Tuggle and Rachael Mills announced that the Disaster Subcommittee Summit is being planned for September/October at GOHSEP Emergency Operation Center. It will focus on connecting social service disaster response providers with civil legal aid. It will be a hybrid meeting to encourage statewide participation

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- f. **IFP Working Group** – Judge Lisa Woodruff-White provided an update on ongoing efforts to improve the In Forma Pauperis (IFP) process across Louisiana’s court system. The IFP brochure is currently being updated with modern graphics to make it more visually appealing and engaging. The IFP working group is also prioritizing judicial training and awareness, with a presentation planned for the spring judges conference. Judge Cynthia Guillory will lead a panel discussion focused on IFP issues. Concerns were raised about the impact of mandatory e-filing on the IFP process, particularly regarding how IFP applications will be handled under the new system. It was noted that some jurisdictions may still rely on manual processes for self-represented litigants, and full implementation may be delayed until 2026. Additionally, the committee expressed concern that not all courts are equally committed to making IFP forms readily accessible. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring IFP forms are as easy to access as standard filing documents. A mandatory, fillable PDF IFP form is currently available for use in district courts.

V. Access to Justice Commission Issues and Initiatives

- a. **Self-Represented Litigants Committee** – Stephanie Beaugh discussed plans for the upcoming Self-Represented Litigants (SRL) Summit, scheduled for May 2 at the 22nd Judicial District Court, with a registration link to be circulated. Topics will include In Forma Pauperis (IFP) issues, strategies to better reach SRLs, challenges specific to military service members, and ethical considerations. The group is also researching “safe harbor” rules, following a suggestion from the Chief Justice to explore court rule changes rather than legislation. Meetings with the National Center for State Courts have provided insights into how other states approach these rules. The committee remains focused on improving access to justice for SRLs and is exploring collaborative strategies to reduce barriers and support meaningful participation in the legal system.
- b. **Technology Updates** – Amanda Brown and Adrienne Wheeler reported on several technology initiatives aimed at improving access to justice. Kiosks funded by the Louisiana Bar Foundation are planned for installation in all 64 parishes, with the first set to launch in the 16th Judicial District (Iberia), 6th Judicial District (Madison Parish), and East Baton Rouge Family Court. Installation is free for interested district courts. The Navigator redesign is in progress, pending final LSC contract approval, with collaboration from Southeast and 2-1-1 partners focused on taxonomy alignment. The first Will Generator clinic at the Sanchez Center produced 79 documents for 65 individuals, including 49 wills and 20 medical powers of attorney, with an average client age of 63. Efforts are underway to expand document offerings and onboard additional organizations. Lastly, the group discussed developing a global data tracking resource to compile usage analytics across platforms.

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- c. **Community Outreach and Education Committee** – Amy Duncan gave an update on the upcoming Third Annual Access to Justice (ATJ) Conclave, scheduled for April 23 at the Louisiana Supreme Court in New Orleans. This in-person event will bring together access to justice leaders to explore challenges, share best practices, and highlight successful local programs. Focus areas include pro bono organizations, collaborative partnerships with groups like 2-1-1, and statewide initiatives presented in a TED-talk format. Featured presenters include the New Orleans Pro Bono Project, Appleseed's Will Generator program, and the Northeast Bar Foundation. Danielle Hirsch of the National Center for State Courts will deliver the keynote, addressing topics such as Safe Harbor rules, AI, and navigator programs. Increased participation is expected from judges, court staff, and clerk personnel.

- V. **Adjournment** - Monte Mollere announced his retirement at the end of the bar year, with his last day of work set for June 30. Monte has dedicated 27 years and 11 months to advancing access to justice in Louisiana. The committee expressed deep appreciation for his longstanding leadership, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to this work. His contributions have had a lasting impact, and he will be greatly missed.

Thank you all for devoting your time and talent to the 2024-25 LSBA's Access to Justice Committee. We hope you will continue to be a member of the ATJ Committee during the 2024-25 Bar Year. There is no need to complete the LSBA Committee Form unless you wish. Bridget Berins will survey all current members and inform the incoming President of your wish to remain or be removed from the ATJ Committee. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Bridget at Bridget.berins@lsba.org.