



# ONE LOUISIANA

# LSBA RESPONDS TO LOUISIANA FLOODING DISASTER

*Service to the Public. Service to the Profession.*

**Legal Assistance Efforts Underway for Citizens and Legal Professionals**

## Message from the LSBA President

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is working hard to help its members in the aftermath of the devastating flooding that has affected a large portion of our state. The LSBA is dedicated to serving the needs of our members, the courts and the public throughout this disaster and its aftermath. The LSBA's disaster response website, <https://www.lsba.org/dr>, will serve as a single source for information on court closings, announcements and emergency contact information.

Additionally, we have made the LSBA Disaster Planning Handbook, which contains practical information on emergency response, the recovery process, and how to prepare your law practice for emergencies in the future, available as an online resource.

It is critical that we pull together as a legal community during this crisis. The LSBA will continue to do its best to help you during this time of misfortune and recovery.

—Darrel J. Papillion

2016-2017 LSBA President

## Governor Amends Executive Order on Emergency Suspension of Legal Deadlines

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards has amended his previous Executive Order (JBE 2016-53) for the emergency suspension of deadlines in legal, administrative and regulatory proceedings.

“In this time of disastrous disruption of Louisiana citizens’ lives, services and the infrastructure of the justice system, this emergency suspension of deadlines in

state legal, administrative and regulatory proceedings is certainly a welcome relief for members of the

Louisiana Bar, their clients and all those with pending matters,” said Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson.

Review the amended Executive Order (JBE 2016-57): [files.lsba.org/documents/News/LSBANews/AmendedExOrder-JBE201657.pdf](https://files.lsba.org/documents/News/LSBANews/AmendedExOrder-JBE201657.pdf).

## Louisiana Supreme Court Monitoring Court Closures Due to Flooding

Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson said, due to the flood conditions affecting several Louisiana parishes, numerous state and federal courts have temporarily closed until conditions improve. Citizens and the legal community should refer to the Louisiana Supreme Court website home page at [www.lasc.org](http://www.lasc.org) for the most current list of all court closures.

## Donations Being Accepted Online for Flood Disaster Relief

The Baton Rouge Bar Foundation has established a Disaster Relief Fund to assist legal professionals who have been impacted by the flooding. For more information, to apply for a grant or make a donation, go to: [www.brba.org/Web/Foundation/Bar\\_Foundation.aspx](http://www.brba.org/Web/Foundation/Bar_Foundation.aspx).

## SOLACE Support for Those Affected by Flooding

SOLACE is accepting assistance requests for non-monetary needs from those affected by the severe weather. Requests can be for gift cards, furniture, office space, temporary housing, food, etc. Requests for assistance will be circulated to the 20,000+ SOLACE members. If you or someone you know needs assistance, email the request to SOLACE: [solaceinfo@lasolace.org](mailto:solaceinfo@lasolace.org). Include an email address that protects the sender's identity. For more information on the SOLACE Program, go to: [www.lsba.org/Members/Solace.aspx](http://www.lsba.org/Members/Solace.aspx).

## Call for Volunteers: Flooding Victims Need Legal Assistance

Attorney volunteers are being sought to provide legal advice and counseling to individuals impacted statewide by the recent flooding. Volunteers are needed to answer questions from individuals seeking assistance at Disaster Recovery Centers, to assist the Louisiana Civil Justice Center in answering calls through the Statewide Disaster Hotline and to work with local pro bono organizations. To volunteer online, click on the "Volunteer" button at: [www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr). Or contact Rachael Mills at (504)619-0104 or email [rachael.mills@lsba.org](mailto:rachael.mills@lsba.org).

## Free Legal Assistance Available for Louisiana Flood Victims

A toll-free legal aid hotline is available for victims of the storms and flooding in Louisiana. The service, which allows callers to request the assistance of a lawyer, is a partnership between the Louisiana State Bar Association, the Louisiana Civil Justice Center, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Low-income survivors facing legal issues may call 1-800-310-7029, the assistance hotline activated by Louisiana Civil Justice Center. Callers should identify that they are

seeking storm-related legal assistance and should identify the parish in which they are located. Survivors who qualify for assistance will be matched with Louisiana lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal help.

Examples of legal assistance available include:

- ▶ assistance with securing FEMA and other benefits available to disaster survivors;
- ▶ assistance with life, medical and property insurance claims;
- ▶ help with home repair contracts and contractors;

- ▶ replacement of wills and other important legal documents destroyed in the disaster;

- ▶ assistance in consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures;

- ▶ counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems; and

- ▶ counseling on landlord/tenant problems.

The hotline is available 24/7 and callers can leave a message any time. Individuals who qualify for assistance will be matched with Louisiana lawyers who have volunteered to provide free, limited legal help. Survivors should be aware that there are some limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (*i.e.*, those cases where fees are paid as part of the settlement by the court). Such cases are referred to a lawyer referral service.

## FEMA and SBA Assistance Offered

Residents who sustained property damage as a result of the severe storms and flooding are urged to register with FEMA, as they may be eligible for federal and state disaster assistance. Attorneys can register online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](http://DisasterAssistance.gov) or via smartphone or Web-enabled device at [m.fema.gov](http://m.fema.gov). Applicants may also call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY) from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Flood survivors are also encouraged to call the FEMA hotline to report their damage. Other flooding resources may be found on [www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr).

Low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are available for eligible applicants. SBA helps businesses of all sizes (including landlords), private nonprofit organizations, homeowners, and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or damaged personal property. Disaster

loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries.

For more information, individuals may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center by calling 800-659-2955, emailing [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov), or visiting SBA's website at [disasterloan.sba.gov/la](http://disasterloan.sba.gov/la). Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may call 800-877-8339.

For more information on Louisiana's recovery, visit the disaster Web page at [www.fema.gov/disaster/4277](http://www.fema.gov/disaster/4277), Twitter at [www.twitter.com/femaregion6](http://www.twitter.com/femaregion6), and the Louisiana Division of Emergency Management website, [emergency.louisiana.gov/](http://emergency.louisiana.gov/).

## Beware of Fraud

Both FEMA and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office are warning Louisiana residents of the risk of fraud and common scams in the wake of the severe weather. Common post-disaster fraud practices include phony housing inspectors, fraudulent building contractors, bogus pleas for disaster donations, and fake offers of state or federal aid. Louisianans are urged to ask questions, and to require identification when someone claims to represent a government agency.

Survivors should also keep in mind that state and federal workers never ask for or accept money, and always carry identification badges with a photograph. There is no fee required to apply for or to receive disaster assistance from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), or the state. Additionally, no state or federal government disaster assistance agency will call to ask for your financial account information. Unless you place a call to the agency yourself, you should not provide personal information over the phone as it can lead to identity theft.

Those who suspect fraud can call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 (toll free). Complaints may also be made to the Louisiana Attorney General's Office Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-351-4889.

## Free Replacement Bar Licenses and LSU Diplomas

- ▶ The Louisiana Supreme Court Clerk of Court's office will issue free replacement Bar licenses for all those damaged in the flooding. Call (504)310-2300.

- ▶ The Louisiana State University Registrar's Office will reprint, free of charge, any LSU diploma lost in the flooding. Email [sarahmartin@lsu.edu](mailto:sarahmartin@lsu.edu).