

**American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division**  
*The Affiliate*

## **How Lawyers Are Responding to the BP Oil Spill**

*By Keya Koul*

The explosion on April 20 aboard the Deepwater Horizon, a BP drilling rig working on a well one mile underwater, created the largest oil spill in American history. The environmental and economic impact of this oil spill is growing. Local, state, and federal agencies have created websites that provide valuable information on legal rights, pro bono opportunities, and resources available to tackle this disaster.

- National Disaster Legal Aid ([www.disasterlegalaids.org](http://www.disasterlegalaids.org)) provides information to those needing, and willing to provide, legal assistance and resources. In the aftermath of a disaster of this magnitude, it is of the utmost importance to make any and all resources readily available.
- The New Orleans Bar Association has a Gulf Oil Disaster Legal Resources page with information on lawyer referral services, unemployment insurance claims, economic injury disaster loans from the Small Business Administration, and local emergency relief centers. These resources and more are available at [www.neworleansbar.org/GulfOilDisasterLegalResources.htm](http://www.neworleansbar.org/GulfOilDisasterLegalResources.htm) and [www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/index.html).
- The Mississippi Bar's "Disaster Legal Information Guide" ([www.msbar.org/admin/spotimages/2134.pdf](http://www.msbar.org/admin/spotimages/2134.pdf)) provides information and advice to people whose lives have been impacted by the BP oil spill and its aftermath. "After events of this nature, it is sometimes difficult for those who may have been injured or damaged to make informed decisions about their legal rights," says George Fair, President of The Mississippi Bar. "The Bar wants to make sure no one takes advantage of them as they try to make these decisions."
- The organization [www.probono.net](http://www.probono.net) has a forum for public interest and pro bono attorneys working on the aftermath of the oil disaster. More information is available at [www.probono.net/la/oildisaster](http://www.probono.net/la/oildisaster).

As the full impact of the BP oil spill comes to light, these resources and other similar ones will be critical in ensuring the protection of the legal rights of those injured or damaged by the oil spill.

Additional resources can be found at [www.abanet.org/disaster/legal\\_assistance.html](http://www.abanet.org/disaster/legal_assistance.html).

*Keya Koul is an Assistant Editor of The Affiliate and an attorney with the Albuquerque, New Mexico, office of Castle Meinhold & Stawiarski.*