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Free Legal Assistance Available for People Impacted by the Remnants of Hurricane Ida in New York

Hotline #: (888) 399-5459

Updated November 9, 2021 – A toll-free legal assistance hotline is available to those affected by the severe storms and flooding caused by Hurricane Ida in September. This service is being provided in partnership with the New York State Bar Association, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other local organizations. Low-income individuals facing legal issues as a result of this disaster may call (888) 399-5459 for help, including:

- assistance securing government benefits as they are made 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 lost or destroyed in the disaster
- consumer protection issues such as price-gouging and avoiding contractor scams in the rebuilding process
- counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems; and
- counseling on landlord-tenant problems.

“Hurricane Ida – though no longer a hurricane by the time it reached New York State -- was a tremendous blow to the state in terms of lives lost and property damage,” said T. Andrew Brown, president of the New York State Bar Association. “We are providing this hotline to make sure that

those low-income residents who have suffered because of the storm get the legal help they need to start rebuilding their lives.”

Callers to the hotline should say that they are seeking storm or flooding related legal assistance, identify the county in which they are located and be prepared to provide a phone number where they can be reached. Survivors may also apply online by completing a form available at <https://nysba.org/ida>.

Major Disaster Declaration 4615-DR

On September 6, 2021, FEMA [announced](#) a major disaster declaration for the state of New York, making federal funding available to individuals and business owners who sustained damage as a result of the severe storms and flooding that struck this region between September 1st and September 3rd, 2021. As of this press release date, only people in the following counties are eligible to apply:

- Bronx (County)
- Dutchess (County)
- Kings (County)
- Nassau (County)
- Queens (County)
- Richmond (County)
- Rockland (County)
- Suffolk (County)
- Westchester (County)

People who sustained property damage as a result of these severe storms and flooding are urged to register with FEMA, as they may be eligible for federal and state disaster assistance. People can register online at DisasterAssistance.gov or via smartphone or web-enabled device at m.fema.gov. Applicants may also call (800) 621-3362 or (800) 462-7585 TTY.

Applicants should be prepared to provide basic information about themselves, any insurance coverage and any other information to help substantiate their loss. **The deadline to register with FEMA is Monday, December 6, 2021.**

Low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administrative (SBA) are also 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 Service Center by calling (800) 659-2955, e-mailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov or visiting SBA’s website at disasterloan.sba.gov/ela. Deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals may call (800) 877-8339.

Beware of Fraud

FEMA warns residents of the risk of fraud and common scams in the wake of the severe storms and flooding. Common post-disaster fraud practices include fake housing inspectors, fraudulent building contractors, bogus pleas for disaster donations and fake offers of state or federal aid. Residents are urged to ask questions and to require identification when someone claims to represent a government agency.

Those affected 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 of New York. Further, 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 toll free at (866) 720-5721. Complaints may also be made to local law enforcement agencies.

Barratry or Improper Solicitation

In many cases it is unethical in New York for a lawyer or someone representing a lawyer to contact a person for purposes of legal representation if the person has not first requested the call or personal visit. The contact is not unethical if the attorney is not seeking payment or has a preexisting professional-client or family relationship with the person being contacted.

If you witness something you believe to be improper solicitation, or barratry, please get the name and phone number of the person making contact and report it to your local law enforcement authority.

Partnership Members

The New York State Bar Association – nysba.org

The New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) has been the voice of the legal profession in New York state for more than 140 years. Its mission is to shape the development of law, educate and inform the public, and respond to the demands of our diverse and ever changing legal profession. NYSBA advocates for state and federal legislation and works tirelessly to promote equal access to justice for all.

Legal Services of Hudson Valley – lshv.org

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) is a non-profit law firm that provides free, high quality counsel in civil matters for individuals and families who cannot afford to pay an attorney when their basic human needs are at stake. These include urgent legal needs such as: housing emergencies (eviction and foreclosure prevention), domestic violence (orders of protection, child custody, etc.), healthcare, disability and benefits, elder law, consumer fraud and more. LSHV serves low income individuals and families in the seven (7) counties that make up the Hudson Valley (Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Ulster, and Sullivan).

Nassau Suffolk Law Services – nslawservices.org

Nassau Suffolk Law Services is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal assistance in civil (non-criminal) matters to people with low incomes or disabilities throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Established in 1966, NSLS was one of the first Legal Services Corporation programs in New York State.

City Bar Justice Center – citybarjusticecenter.org

The City Bar Justice Center (CBJC), the largest division of the City Bar Fund which is the nonprofit affiliate of the New York City Bar Association, furthers access to justice by addressing unmet civil legal needs of New Yorkers struggling with poverty and systemic socioeconomic barriers. CBJC mobilizes law firms, corporate legal departments, and other legal institutions to provide pro bono legal services; educates the public on pertinent legal issues; fosters strategic community relationships; and impacts public policy. CBJC's dozen civil justice projects, including the largest civil legal hotline in New York, are led by a staff of dedicated attorneys and professionals who provide high-quality civil legal services through brief advice and information, referrals, and both limited scope and extended representation that benefit over 24,000 New Yorkers each year.

Legal Services NYC – legalservicesnyc.org

Legal Services NYC, the nation's largest provider of free civil legal services, fights poverty and seeks racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. For over 50 years, LSNYC has challenged systemic injustices that trap people in poverty and helped clients meet basic needs for housing, income and economic security, family and immigration stability, education, and health care. With deep roots in the communities we serve, LSNYC's staff of 600 people serve more than 112,000 New Yorkers annually, providing top-notch free legal help during times of need, including the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, to ensure that New Yorkers and their families have access to the services, resources, and protections they need to survive.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division – americanbar.org

The ABA YLD, the largest national organization of young lawyers, provides leadership in serving the public and the profession, and promotes excellence and fulfillment in the practice of law. Its parent organization, the ABA, is the national voice of the legal profession and the largest voluntary professional membership group in the world.

Federal Emergency Management Agency – fema.gov

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters—whether natural or man-made—including acts of terror. Through an agreement with the ABA, FEMA underwrites the cost of operating toll-free legal assistance lines for survivors in areas designated as federal disaster sites.

Disaster Legal Aid.Org – disasterlegalaid.org

The National Disaster Legal Aid Resource Center, or DisasterLegalAid.org (DLA), is a nationwide project that hosts self-help tools and legal information for people and communities impacted by natural disasters. DLA also serves as a central hub for collaboration, communication, and networking among legal advocates serving disaster-affected individuals. It is a collaborative effort of Lone Star Legal Aid, Pro Bono Net, the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, and the National Legal Aid & Defender Association.