



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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### Free legal assistance available for South Carolina hurricane victims

(COLUMBIA, September 25, 2018)—A toll-free legal aid hotline is available to South Carolina victims of storm-related damage as a result of Hurricane Florence in recently declared disaster areas in **Dillon, Horry, Marion, and Marlboro counties**.

The service, which allows callers to request the assistance of a lawyer to aid in flood related matters, is a partnership between the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, the South Carolina Bar, the South Carolina Bar Young Lawyers Division, and South Carolina Legal Services.

Hurricane victims facing legal issues who are unable to afford a lawyer may call **1-877-797-2227 ext. 120 (toll-free)** or **(803) 576-3815** between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to request assistance. When connected to the hotline, callers should identify that they are seeking disaster-related legal assistance, brief details of the assistance needed and in which disaster-declared county they are located. Individuals who qualify for assistance will be matched with South Carolina lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal assistance.

Hurricane victims may also request assistance online by emailing [disasterinfo@scbar.org](mailto:disasterinfo@scbar.org) or submitting disaster-related questions to [scfreelegalanswers.org](http://scfreelegalanswers.org).

**The type of legal assistance available includes:**

- Assistance with securing FEMA and other government benefits available to disaster victims;
- 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.

### **Background:**

When the President declares a major disaster, FEMA, in cooperation with the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for disaster victims to request legal assistance. Funding for the toll-free line comes from FEMA under the authority of Section 415 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 100-707). The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division in turn partners with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteers in affected areas to handle victims' cases. Victims should be aware that there are limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (i.e., those cases where attorneys are paid part of the settlement by a court). Such cases are referred to a local lawyer referral service.

Low-income residents may also contact South Carolina Legal Services at 1-888-346-5592 between 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday to Thursday for free legal representation, advocacy and information. An intake for free services may also be submitted online at [www.lawhelp.org/sc/online-intake](http://www.lawhelp.org/sc/online-intake).

### **Partner Members:**

#### **American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division**

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.

#### **South Carolina Bar**

The South Carolina Bar is a professional membership group of more than 16,000 lawyers that is committed to advancing justice, professionalism and understanding of the law in South Carolina.

#### **South Carolina Bar Young Lawyers Division**

The Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the South Carolina Bar is a professional service organization comprised of all members of the South Carolina Bar in good standing under 36 years of age, or those admitted to the South Carolina Bar as their first bar within the past 5 years. The YLD coordinates various programs across the state designed to serve the public, advance the legal profession or both.

#### **South Carolina Legal Services**

South Carolina Legal Services (SCLS) provides free legal services in a wide variety of civil (non-criminal) legal matters to eligible low-income residents of South Carolina. SCLS is a non-profit law firm, funded by grants from the federally funded Legal Services Corporation, the South Carolina Bar Foundation, local United Ways, state court filing fees and other federal, state and local funding.

**National Disaster Legal Aid Online**

NDLA (available at: [disasterlegalaid.org](http://disasterlegalaid.org)) is a collaborative effort of Lone Star Legal Aid, the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, and Pro Bono Net.

**United Policyholders** – United Policyholders (UP) ([www.uphelp.org](http://www.uphelp.org)) is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) consumer advocacy group that specializes in helping disaster survivors with insurance claim issues. UP also trains case managers and legal aid lawyers to assist clients with insurance and disaster recovery matters.