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LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

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FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR WISCONSIN SEVERE WEATHER SURVIVORS

WISCONSIN, November 27, 2018— A legal hotline is now available for survivors of the severe weather in Wisconsin in **Adams, Crawford, Dane, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Iron, Juneau, La Crosse, Marquette, Monroe, Ozaukee, Richland, Sauk, and Vernon** Counties. Disaster survivors facing legal issues related to the flooding and severe weather and who are unable to afford a lawyer may call the hotline at 877-947-5291. Hours are 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Callers may also leave a message or submit their questions online at wi.freelegalanswers.org.

The service, which allows callers to receive limited legal assistance from a volunteer lawyer, is a

partnership between the State Bar of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Young Lawyers Association, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The type of legal assistance available includes:

- Assistance with securing FEMA and other government 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;
- Assisting in consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures;
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems;
- Counseling on landlord-tenant problems.

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 money award. Such matters can be referred for skilled lawyer representation through a State Bar of Wisconsin certified lawyer referral service in your area.

Major Disaster Declaration

On October 18, 2018, a Major Disaster Declaration was issued for the state of Wisconsin, making federal funding available to individuals, households, and disaster-damaged public facilities that were affected by the severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, flooding, and landslides in the counties of Adams, Crawford, Dane, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Iron, Juneau, La Crosse, Marquette, Monroe, Ozaukee, Richland, Sauk, and Vernon.

To register with FEMA, and if eligible, apply for federal and state disaster assistance, 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) seven days a week from 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Applicants should be prepared to provide basic information about themselves, insurance coverage, and any other information to help substantiate the loss.

Please note that if you are eligible for an Individual Assistance grant you are not required to pay back the grant to FEMA. There is no income threshold for Individual Assistance grants, but you may be referred to the Small Business Administration (SBA) for a low interest disaster loan to assist in your recovery. These low interest disaster loans for homeowners and businesses from the SBA must be repaid.

In addition, there is information available at:

Dma.wi.gov – This statewide website, hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, Division of Emergency Management, provides disaster relief information, incident reports, and various resources for those affected by disasters.

www.disasterlegalaid.org – This national website, a collaborative effort of Lone Star Legal Aid, the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, the National Legal Aid and

Defender Association, the Texas Legal Services Center and Pro Bono Net, provides information on legal issues related to disasters to the low and moderate-income public.

www.uphelp.org – United Policyholders (UP) 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 recovery matters, and for help with flood, wind, hurricane and auto insurance questions.

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 survivors 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 bars, local bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteer lawyers in affected areas to handle survivors' cases.

Hotline Partner Members

The following organizations have joined forces to establish a hotline for severe weather survivors to request free legal assistance, and to provide coordination for volunteer attorneys.

State Bar of Wisconsin Young Lawyers Division: The State Bar of Wisconsin YLD encourages division members to be leaders in the profession and their communities. The YLD is committed to providing leadership training and networking opportunities to its members and encourages its members to become active in the State Bar, their local bar associations, and in the communities where they work and live.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division – The ABA YLD is 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 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.

Legal Services Corporation: The Legal Services Corporation is a publicly funded, 501 non-profit corporation established by the United States Congress. It seeks to ensure equal access to justice under the law for all Americans by providing funding for civil legal aid to those who otherwise would be unable to afford it.

Legal Action of Wisconsin, Inc.: Legal Action of Wisconsin provides free legal services to low-income people.