Happy Friday, ATJ enthusiasts! Impactful SCOTUS decisions, globe-trotting Snowdens, NBA and NHL champions, baby Kardashians (I’m told). We’re not short on news. And this is true in our smaller arena, too. Before moving into ATJ developments, some related items that have caught my attention:

How healthy is our profession’s job market, and how may the profession look (and behave) differently in the coming years? My old employer, NALP, released findings regarding the law school Class of 2012’s movement into the labor force. For a fifth straight year the employment rate for grads has fallen. It is now at 84.7%. This is the lowest the rate has been since the recession of the early 1990s (although there are some positive markers in the data, too). Also, news of layoffs at Weil, Gotshal, & Manges prompted questions about the future of law-firm business models, even as others in the rarefied Biglaw air saw this as an isolated occurrence. Richard Zorzaworries that shifts in how large firms conduct business could have ramifications for our profession’s commitment to ATJ. Finally, speaking of the profession’s future, the Washington University Journal of Law & Policy has devoted its current edition to looking at “Law School in the New Legal Environment.”

Much food for thought. Let’s move into the ATJ news. The short, short version:

- The Volunteer State’s Faith & Justice Alliance gets AP attention;
- Several new ATJ measures announced by IL high court;
- Remarks worth reading, from a DC ATJ Commission event;
- Equal Justice Works, hard at work;
- Connecticut Unbundled (tip of cap: Aeschylus);
- Modest Means program in the Beehive State;
- In DC, a $700K IOLTA disbursement is about on par w/ last year;
- Harvard Law’s Public Service Venture Fund launches;
- In the Lone Star State, pro se divorce forms;
- NYC Bar recommends boosted role for “Nonlawyer Practitioners”;
- A veterans’ needs-assessment report from Pine Tree Legal Assistance;
- Controversy surrounding New York’s new pro bono reporting requirement;
• How SCOTUS’s Voting Rights Act decision fouls up some recent Biglaw pro bono efforts;
• A look at MFY Legal Services’ collaborations with the private bar;
• The value of pro bono in channeling know-how from the for-profit sector;
• Law students from the Dominican Republic learning about ATJ efforts in New York;
• For law students in DC: a July 11 program on postgraduate public interest fellowships;

The summaries:

ATJ Commission & Related News
• 6.19.13 – here’s a great look at the Tennessee Access to Justice Commission’s newly launched Faith & Justice Alliance, via the Associated Press: “Tennessee’s faith-based initiative...recognizes that many people who could use an attorney’s help would never go to a legal aid clinic even if it were held at their house of worship. That’s because they don’t recognize their problem as a legal one. ‘People show up every day at churches and synagogues and mosques, and they may not ask for legal help. They may need food assistance. But often there is an underlying legal problem,’ said Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Connie Clark, who helped the faith-based initiative get off the ground. ‘We realized we can help more people by going to where they are already going for help,’ ”
• 6.18.13 – [Illinois] Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride...announced Tuesday...new measures to improve equal access to justice for all of the people of Illinois, and especially for the poor and vulnerable... These measures were recommended to the Chief Justice and to the Court by its Commission on Access to Justice. Chief Justice Kilbride announced their approval as the Commission marked the first year of its existence and a noteworthy record of early achievement. The new measures include (a) an amendment to the Judicial Canons of Ethics permitting judges to make it easier for the increasing number of persons who come to court without an attorney; (b) creation of a model language access plan (LAP) for all courts across the state to enhance the integrity of judicial proceedings; (c) easing attorney licensing requirements for lawyer spouses and civil union partners of active military personnel serving in Illinois; and (d) an amended rule increasing the number of law students eligible to practice under the supervision of an attorney on behalf of needy clients. The package of rules also provides for a [pro hac vice fees fund, partial proceeds of which] may be used by the Supreme Court to fund specific activities and initiatives promoting access to justice. (Here’s the full announcement.)
• My buddy Jess Rosenbaum of the DC ATJ Commission shared with me remarks made by Hon. David S. Tatel, of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, at a springtime event celebrating the Commission’s successful “Raising the Bar” legal-aid fundraising program. Judge Tatel emphasized our profession’s obligation to lead the way in narrowing the justice gap, and the importance of the private bar financial support for legal services providers. Good read.

Legal Aid Service Delivery & Funding
• An Equal Justice Works twofer:
  • 6.26.13 – Equal Justice Works deploys the Veterans Legal Corps: “Equal Justice Works...today announced the creation of the Veterans Legal Corps – 36 lawyers and 200 law students, serving the needs of low-income and homeless veterans. Equal Justice Works received AmeriCorps funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service/AmeriCorps. Equal Justice Works will place the lawyers and law students in legal aid organizations and courts across the country
to improve the lives of veterans and their families by helping them secure access
to income, housing, employment, and health care.” (Here’s the announcement.)

- 6.25.13 – David Stern of Equal Justice Works explain how corporation/law firm
  partnerships have emerged as an effective funding vehicle for funding public
  interest fellowships. (Story in the Metropolitan Corporate Counsel.)

  pilot program which will be started in coming weeks, the state will for the first time begin
  allowing what has been referred to as limited scope representation, or unbundling. The new
  program, which will be started in to judicial districts which have not yet been announced, will
  allow state Judicial Branch leaders a chance to see how limited scope representation works. The
  change to the rules of the Connecticut Practice Book to allow for the pilot program were passed
  unanimously by the judges of the Superior Court.”

- 6.21.13 – “The Utah State Bar has introduced a new program to expand access to legal services
  for Utahans with ‘modest means.’ The Modest Means Lawyer Referral program will make legal
  assistance available for reduced rates to those whose incomes are up to three times above the
  federal poverty guidelines. For example, a family of four with an income up to $70,000 may
  qualify for discounted attorney fees of $50 to $75 an hour. The program comes after the Pro
  Bono Commission was created last year to offer legal services to those who are unable to
  pay.” (Story from the Deseret News.)

- 6.20.13 – “After seeing a 30 percent drop in grants to civil legal services groups in 2012, the
  D.C. Bar Foundation announced today that this year’s round of grants will total $700,000,
  representing a modest increase. The foundation awarded 20 grants for programs at 19 different
  organizations ranging from $8,000 to $76,000. The grants are administered by the D.C. Bar
  Foundation and are funded through the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts Program and
  contributions from local law firms. This year’s grants were up by $15,000 from the previous
  year. The foundation said the growth was due to “modest increases” in IOLTA revenue, which
  had dropped during the recession because of low interest rates, and strong contributions from
  across the bar.” (Story from the Blog of the Legal Times.)

- June 19, 2013 – Harvard Law School’s Public Service Venture Fund departs from the normal
  postgraduate fellowship-funding model and instead provides seed funding for startup, socially-
  minded enterprises. From theNational Law Journal: “While many law schools offer stipends or
  grants for students and graduates to do public interest work, Harvard is the first to offer support
  for entrepreneurial-minded graduates who want to create their own public service-oriented
  projects. The law school announced the fund in 2010, offering $1 million each year to graduate-
  backed start-ups and to send Harvard graduates to work in existing nonprofit organizations or
  government agencies. Seed-grant recipients will receive $80,000 per year, with the expectation
  that the funding would be renewed for a second year. Harvard also plans to offer support
  services including assistance in securing nonprofit status, help with intellectual property and
  contractual issues, and social media mentoring.” (Here’ a little more from a Harvard Law
  School announcement.)

- 6.17.13 – From a Texas Supreme Court announcement: “In an order posted Tuesday the Texas
  Supreme Court issued revised do-it-yourself divorce forms designed for poor couples without
  real-property holdings and children and without contested issues in their divorce. The revised
  forms establish a section for a divorcing couple to identify retirement accounts each may hold
  and possibly to divide retirement in the final divorce decree. Any division of a retirement
  account, the forms note, must be enforced by a qualified domestic-relations order that should be
  prepared by an attorney. The Court approved the initial divorce forms in November. They were
  immediately effective, subject to public comment. The revised forms become effective
  immediately.”

- June, 2013 – an NYC Bar Association report, Narrowing the “Justice Gap”: Roles for
  Nonlawyer Practitioners, peers over the edge of the justice gap and concludes that non-lawyers
  can and should play expanded roles in delivering legal services. This is an important
  development in the larger ATJ picture and worth a read. David Udell of Cardozo Law School’s
National Center for Access to Justice played a role in authoring the report, and the Center has a summary here.

- June, 2013 – in Maine, Pine Tree Legal Assistance has released the results of a needs assessment performed among the state’s veterans. Well worth a read by any services provider who is sorting out how to engage and serve vets in need.

Pro Bono (see next section for law school pro bono news)

Lots of news/controversy around NY State’s newly-imposed attorney pro bono reporting requirement:

- 6.28.13 – unfortunately this New York Law Journal article is password-protected, but the title offers the gist: “State Bar Rejects Rules on Pro Bono Reporting.” Here’s a little more from a separate NYLJ article couple of days ago: “Citing stronger-than-anticipated sentiment against the mandatory reporting of pro bono contributions, the leadership of the New York State Bar Association will write to Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman opposing the disclosure. A ‘spirited discussion’ of the new disclosure rules by the bar group’s executive committee during its spring meeting over the weekend led to a decision to remind the chief judge that the House of Delegates came out against self-reporting of pro-bono in 2004….” And here is that letter from NYSBA president David Schraver to Chief Judge Lippman.
  - 6.19.13 – responding to criticism from pro bono advocates, the court system is expanding the scope of work that will qualify for pro bono for purposes of the reporting requirement. The main objection to the initial proposal was that it did not appear to count work on behalf of nonprofit organizations as pro bono. (Read more in the New York Law Journal.)
  - 6.25.13 – an interesting piece on the how the recent, voting-rights pro bono work performed by some law firms may be undone by the Supreme Court’s Shelby County v. Holder decision: “The decision leaves hanging some of the most notable pro bono victories large law firms won last year, especially those that relied heavily on the “preclearance” mechanism of section 5. Lawyers from firms including Arnold & Porter; Dechert; Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson; and Sullivan & Cromwell donated thousands of hours of time seeking to block newly passed laws in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas requiring voters to present photo ID at the polls.” (Story from Am Law Daily.)
  - 6.19.13 – a piece in Metropolitan Corporate Counsel offers a nice overview of MFY Legal Services’ pro bono offerings, including an externship program with local law firms and several specialized projects.
  - 6.19.13 – a Huffington Post piece looks at the power of pro bono in channeling for-profit sector resources and ingenuity toward social good: “Nonprofit organizations today are being called to solve pressing social and economic issues…while their organizational models, budgets and staffing structures struggle to keep up. Through effective pro bono volunteering, businesses can help nonprofits harness innovation and technology to rapidly adapt to quickly changing market forces and position themselves for long-term success…. For example, Capital One pro bono volunteers recently partnered with the Virginia legal community to help Legal Aid of Central Virginia develop a better long-term solution to serving clients in need more efficiently….”

Law School Public Service/Pro Bono

- 6.28.13 – a group of law students from the Dominican Republic “ha[s] spent the past month observing how low-income New Yorkers use do-it-yourself resources to navigate the shoals of the state court system. Their hope, they said, is to come away with ideas they can implement back home. For the past three weeks, [eleven] students have interned with judges of Dominican descent in courts…as part of an initiative designed to give them an inside view of New York State Courts’ Access to Justice program…. [The] program is coordinated by Supreme Court Justice Fern Fisher, the deputy chief administrative judge for city courts, and Fred Rooney, the former longtime director of City University of New York School of Law’s Community Legal Resource Network. (Full story from the New York Law Journal.)
Do you know any law students who are 1) in DC this summer and 2) interested in postgraduate fellowships? Here’s a must-attend program: “Pathways to Postgraduate Public Interest & Public Service Fellowships,” sponsored by Equal Justice Works, NALP, and the Partnership for Public Service. (That’s a lot of “p’s” in that previous sentence.) Free registration. Taking place on July 11. Info here.

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