Happy Friday, ATJ enthusiasts, and belated Happy Independence Day. We often joke that were one of the Founding Fathers to wake up to modernity he would be quite disconcerted, what with our metropolises, mobile phones, planes, trains, automobiles, and so on. I bet he’d be (appropriately) mortified by the designated hitter rule, too.

But John Adams was prescient in his hope for future celebrations of our Independence Day. He wrote: “It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more. But they best not sully our legacy by drinking that so-called “light beer” or else I will return from the grave to open up a can of whoop-af.” [Ed. note: some liberties taken with Adams’s sentiments.] In any case Adams got everything right…except the date. He was writing about July 2, when he and his colleagues voted on a measure that paved the way for what would become the Declaration of Independence (which, it turns out, may not actually have been signed on July 4 anyway). Well, July 4 is close enough.

Well, I hope you found time to relax over the holiday. I find comfort in reflecting on this thought every July 4th: it’s very easy to feel worn down by democracy, with its constant, ever-evolving challenges to how society functions. Free society is not easy. Weary as it may make me, though, when I pick my head up from it I’m reminded of what a privilege it is that we can all help shape our collective responses to challenges – to carve out our path forward. And as with so many other things in life, being able to live through the journey’s challenges may be just as rewarding as whatever the destination may someday offer us.

But enough of that. Here’s the ATJ news in very, very short:

- NLADA shines the spotlight on Justice Ginsburg;
- Evolutions in how judges interact with self-represented litigants;
- An ATJ newsletter from the Lone Star State;
- Preliminary action on FY2014 LSC funding;
- Equal Justice Works’s new Veterans Legal Corps;
- Happy 50th, Legal aid of Nebraska!
- Court-system budget cuts hurt a CA self-help center;
- A new ED at the Maine Bar Foundation;
- New website accessibility resource for legal aid providers;
- Medical-legal Partnerships using technology;
- Conversation on law-firm business model changes and ATJ;
- Pro bono’s looking up in CA;
- Perhaps not so nationally, according to AmLaw;
- Law school pro bono and the Points of Light;
- Civil Gideon experiment in Illinois(?);
- More on Civil Gideon’s future, from the NCCRC.
And here are the summaries, organized chronologically and by topic:

**Access to Justice Commission News & Related Developments**

- **7.11.13** – Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg will receive the National Legal Aid & Defender Association’s 2013 Exemplar Award, recognizing Ginsburg’s many contributions in promoting equal justice. [Here’s the press release.](#)

- **7.7.13** – [from Richard Zorza’s Access to Justice Blog:](#) “Last year, the Conference of Chief Justices and COSCA passed a joint resolution urging consideration of alternative model language for Rule 2.2 of the Model Code of Judicial Conduct, with an expanded focus on the self-represented. The resolution also urged consideration of the development of state comment language. The Self-Represented Litigation Network has now [released this linked Memo](#), which reviews how several states have responded to this need, and suggests various approaches.”

- **June, 2013** – [the June edition of the Texas ATJ Commission’s newsletter](#) has hit e-newsstands, and includes news on legal aid funding, the Commission’s use of technology, corporate pro bono awards, and more.

**Civil Legal Aid Delivery & Funding**

- **7.10.13** – [some (preliminary stage) Congressional action on LSC’s FY2014 funding](#). Here’s a dispatch from my colleague Ann Carmichael of the ABA’s government affairs office: “The House Commerce Justice Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee marked up its bill for FY14. The bill contains $300 million for LSC, which is about a 14 percent reduction from current levels ($340M). Keep in mind that this is just the first step in what I expect will be a long slog of budget battles. In the coming weeks, the focus will shift somewhat to the Senate, as they have not yet announced their proposed funding level for LSC for the next fiscal year. (The Senate CJS Subcommittee is now scheduled to markup its bill on Tuesday.) Note also that House and Senate are operating from two different budgets, which means that the Senate has about $94 billion dollars more in its budget for FY14 than does the House.” It is worth the emphasis: much more will happen before FY14 budget numbers are finalized. And in all likelihood LSC will fare much better in the Senate. So, FYI, but stay tuned.
  - On a related note, [the National Law Journal ran a July 2 article](#) on how LSC’s FY 2014 budget request humanizes the work of legal aid lawyers by highlighting clients’ stories: “The nation’s providers of civil legal services put something new between the charts and numbers of next year’s budget request—the faces of children, seniors and veterans representing people to whom they provided life-changing help last year.” LSC has always focused on client stories to some degree or other. But this week’s developments suggest that it will need every tool in its arsenal to secure a healthy appropriation.

- **7.10.13** – this came up in our last ATJ Headlines edition, but here’s more recent coverage of a new initiative to serve veterans: “Equal Justice Works…has announced a Veterans Legal Corps, believed the largest single effort to connect pro bono lawyers with veterans across the county. The program will send 36 attorneys into two-year posts at legal aid providers in different states, where they will represent veterans and help their host organizations serve veterans and their legal challenges. Additionally, the program will send 200 law students into veteran-focused public-interest summer jobs during the next three years. The corps is being financed through $1.4 million per year from AmeriCorps and an additional $1 million annually from Equal Justice Works and the legal aid organizations for which the fellows will work.” [Full National Law Journal story.](#)

- **7.10.13** – [happy 50th to Legal Aid of Nebraska!](#) This news story highlights a 50th anniversary event in the town of Grand Island.
7.3.13 – a story out of San Mateo County, California offers a look at how court-system budget cuts are diminishing the resources available to self-represented litigants, even as legal aid providers offer what support they can. (Article from the San Mateo Daily Journal.)

7.3.13 – “The Maine Bar Foundation recently appointed Diana Scully executive director. Following the announcement of the retirement of longtime Executive Director Calien Lewis, the MBF began a national search for her replacement over a year ago.” The Foundation administers IOLTA funds in the Pine Tree State. (Here’s the announcement in the Bangor Daily.)

July, 2013 – the Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project (LSNTAP) has released “The Legal Services Organization’s Guide to Web Accessibility.” As LSNTAP explains, “The thing about web accessibility is that many people confuse it with availability. The fact that you’ve posted information from or about your organization online does not mean that everyone who needs it can effectively use it. Visitors to your site, blog, or YouTube channel may have any number and variety of physical, mental, speech, learning, visual, auditory, or other disabilities. These disabilities can make it difficult or impossible for them to perceive, interpret, or use the information you provide, regardless of how helpful it may be to them.”

6.27.13 – the Shriver Center homes in on medical-legal partnerships (MLPs) and their use of cutting-edge technology: “Across the country, doctors’ offices and hospitals are adapting to new technology. Medical-legal partnerships are no different. Medical-legal partnerships are projects that target the nonmedical sources of health problems such as asthma, diabetes, and depression by training medical professionals to identify legal issues and providing lawyers ready to address patients’ legal needs. In Louisville, Kentucky, the Legal Aid Society of Louisville and Doctors and Lawyers for Kids, Louisville’s medical-legal partnership, have developed a way to use tablet technology to identify pediatric patients who might need legal help. Called an automated legal needs screening tool, this advanced use of technology tries to help families stay healthy by preventing people from being evicted, making sure children are getting the services they need in school, and helping families pay their bills and apply for benefits.”

Pro Bono

7.2.13 – in the prior edition of ATJ Headlines I included a Richard Zorza blog post in which Richard wondered whether the economic forces that are driving large law firms toward more corporate business models may impact their institutional commitments to ATJ work. Richard has since published a response from Pro Bono Institute Esther Lardent, offering polite disagreement and a more optimistic take on Biglaw’s ATJ commitment.

July, 2013 – this month’s edition of California Lawyer contains advice on the best vegan kale recipes for surfers who also do yoga. Just kidding. I indulge in lighthearted California-bashing from time to time. This short CA Lawyer piece looks at the increasing sophistication of law-firm pro bono in the Golden State.

6.27.13 – the American Lawyer’s 2013 pro bono report is published. From their intro: “The Am Law 200 showed healthy increases in revenues and profits in 2012, but in the pro bono world, the downturn lives on. For the second consecutive year, The Am Law 200 posted drops in both total pro bono hours and average hours per lawyer. There were, however, two hints of a nascent rebound. After dropping 10.6 percent in 2011, The Am Law 200’s average percentage of lawyers performing at least 20 hours of pro bono work rose 0.4 percent in 2012, to 44 percent. Additionally, 88 firms increased their pro bono scores in 2012, while 72 showed declines.”

Law School Pro Bono/Public Service

7.10.13 – kudos to my friend Pam Robinson! Pam launched the first voluntary law school pro bono program back in 1989 at the University of South Carolina School of Law, which is
still her home. Shortly after, Pres. George H.W. Bush awarded the program a “Point of Light” – the 444th such distinction bestowed by the White House – in recognition of the pro bono program’s mission and Pam’s ingenuity. Now, all these years later, Pam has been part of the team selecting the 5000th Point of Light. A nice “it’s come full circle” development for Pam, who probably will not want me to remind her that her 1991 Point of Light came at a time when Paula Abdul, Boyz II Men, and Color Me Bad were fixtures on the pop music charts. Congrats, Pam!!!

Civil Right to Counsel

- 6.30.13 – in Illinois, “…a bill waiting for the governor’s signature could provide free legal assistance in the civil arena to those who cannot afford it. Under the limited pilot program, approved by lawmakers in House Bill 3111, legal help would be provided in landlord-tenant disputes to those who fall at or below the federal poverty level. While the finer details have yet to be ironed out, if Gov. Pat Quinn signs the bill, it would be a rare step in providing free legal representation in civil courtrooms.” (Story from the Northwest Herald.)
- June 2013 – a piece by John Pollack of the National Coalition for the Civil Right to Counsel ran in Bloomberg BNA: “The right to counsel in criminal cases has been around for almost 50 years, but the author champions the growing movement to expand the right in civil cases. He notes that the right to counsel is supported by the ABA in civil cases where basic human needs are at stake, many states recognize a right in some civil proceedings, and a federal district court recently concluded that the right to representation applies in immigration removal proceedings for detainees with mental disabilities.”

July 26

Happy Friday, ATJ enthusiasts! I’m breathless in the wake of this week’s news. We’ve endured experienced a royally glorious birth. We’ve also witnessed the less-glorious-if-equally-sensational unmasking of “Carlos Danger” – one whose alias may be, astonishingly and improbably, less Dickensian than his real name. I worry that the many recent ATJ news developments have been eclipsed by these extraordinary goings-on. So let’s look back at what’s happened. Significantly, there has been movement on the Legal Services Corporation’s FY2014 appropriation in both the House and Senate. Nothing is final yet – far from it – but the House Appropriations Committee figure is low and the Senate subcommittee’s recommendation is better. Details below.

The ATJ news, short version:

- Arkansas ATJ Commission’s July newsletter;
- Funding woes hit a Memphis legal aid program;
- Better funding news in Northern California;
- LSC funding news;
- Program monitors self-represented litigants’ experiences in Brooklyn Family Court;
- New clinic for homeless vets is based at the Baltimore VA;
• Church in Hoboken launches a new legal aid program (as a stand-alone nonprofit);
• A Washington State legal-aid attorney highlights good news on court fee waivers;
• Legal Aid of Nebraska supports dads with custody and related troubles;
• Happy centennial, Harvard Legal Aid Bureau!
• Ditto, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid!
• New supports for veterans in need in the Bayou State;
• New online resources for self-represented litigants in Alaska;
• News on the NY State Bar’s opposition to a new mandatory pro bono reporting requirement;
• Speaking of, Indiana looking at mandatory pro bono reporting;
• Back to NY, an initiative to boost corporate counsel pro bono;
• Connecticut Bar’s YLD has pro bono progress to brag about;
• SUNY Buffalo’s law school prepping for the 50-hour pro bono requirement;

The summaries:

Access to Justice Commission & Related News

Civil Legal Aid Delivery & Funding
• 7.23.13 – one more illustration of the toll that funding cuts take on legal aid providers (and clients). From Tennessee: “…Memphis Area Legal Services lost more than $300,000 in state, federal and local funding. Sequestration and lower interest rates on trust accounts have led to fewer dollars. Once busy offices are now empty and the staff has gone from 50 to 38.” (Story from TV station WREG.)
• 7.23.13 – but some much better news for a Northern California legal aid provider: “A pair of 18-month grants for focused legal services won’t save the day, but they could temporarily double the amount of legal assistance available to low-income residents on the North Coast. One grant funded largely by the National Mortgage Settlement Funds will add approximately six full-time attorneys to Legal Services of Northern California…. The other, funded primarily by the Department of Managed Health Care, could add as many as 12 full-time attorneys.” (Story from the Times-Standard of Eureka, CA.)
• 7.22.13 – “Congressional committees have approved budget proposals for Legal Services Corp. but did little to clear up whether the nation’s civil legal service providers will take yet another hit next year. On one hand, the House Appropriations Committee approved a bill last week that includes $300 million for LSC for the fiscal year beginning on Oct. 1. That’s down $28 million from what the panel approved last year amid continued budget constraints on Capitol Hill. But on the other hand, a Senate appropriations panel approved $430 million for LSC, a $28 million increase from what it approved last year and right in line with the White House budget. The Senate and House have traditionally resolved their differences in a budget conference by splitting the two figures down the middle. That outcome would leave LSC, the largest source of financial support nationwide for civil legal aid, with about the same $340 million budget as this year.” (Blog post from the Blog of the Legal Times.)
• 7.22.13 – the Brooklyn Family Court Child Support Study is a courtroom observation initiative which records information on how well the court system is treating self-represented litigants,
and what their experiences are like trying to navigate the justice system. “The project is notable for its breadth — it counts participants from nearly every corner of the legal profession: a public interest law group; a major corporate legal department; 15 law firms; law students from across the country; the courts. The study was conceived by the National Center for Access to Justice [at Cardozo Law]. The study is one piece of a larger effort to establish an Access to Justice Index — an online tool that identifies which state court systems are best meeting the needs of society and which are falling short.” (Article from the National Law Journal.)

7.21.13 – in Maryland, the new Veterans Administration Medical Center legal clinic is housed right in the VA building. “The clinic was created by the VA, the Homeless Persons Representation Project and Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps, which is paying [its first staff attorney’s] salary. Additional legal assistance, which is free to veterans, is to come from area law students and other [volunteer] attorneys.” (Article from the Baltimore Sun.)

7.19.13 – Saints Peter & Paul, a Catholic parish in Hoboken, NJ, has launched a new legal aid program. The Waterfront Project Inc., which is a stand-alone nonprofit organization, “…began in March. Its mission is to ensure equal access to justice by providing legal advice, referral, consultation and representation in civil legal matters to low-income, homeless and otherwise disadvantaged individuals and families of Hudson County.” Doesn’t hurt that the parish’s pastor, Monsignor Robert Meyer, is also a lawyer. (Story from the National Catholic Reporter.)

7.17.13 – a lawyer with the Northwest Justice Project in Washington State pens an op-ed that highlights an important state supreme court decision on court fee waivers for low-income litigants. “The Court stated [in Jafar v. Webb] ‘The plain meaning of GR 34 establishes that a trial court must waive all fees once a litigant is determined to be indigent under the rule,’ meaning ‘a complete waiver in order to allow access to the courts’.” (Op-ed from the Wenatchee World in beautiful Eastern Washington.)

7.14.13 – Legal Aid of Nebraska is partnering with another nonprofit on the “Fathers for a Lifetime” program, which provides legal and other support services to fathers who are involved in custody disputes or otherwise in need of help in establishing stable relationships with their children. (Story from KETV.)

Birthdays!

7.12.13 – Happy 100th, Harvard Legal Aid Bureau! “One hundred years ago, a small group of Harvard Law students formed an organization to provide legal aid to the poor. In the 10 decades since its founding, the Legal Aid Bureau—the oldest student-run legal services program in the country—has helped thousands of clients.” Details on Harvard Law’s website. It’s worth clicking in to see the picture of the Bureau’s membership in 1914-15. Those guys look like they’re ready to party.

7.12.13 – but wait! Another legal aid provider hits the century mark: “One hundred years ago, John Benson opened the doors of a Minneapolis law office meant to help the poor and underserved. Today, that one-lawyer office has morphed into Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, an organization that has since offered legal help to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Minnesotans.” (Story from MinnPost.)

July, 2013 – progress in serving veterans in Louisiana. First, Judge Jay Zainey of the Eastern District of Louisiana reports that two veterans courts are in the works in the New Orleans area. Second, a partnership with the local Veterans Administration (VA) office has produced a streamlined questionnaire form for assessing a vet’s eligibility for benefits. The form has been distributed to local homeless shelters and to volunteer attorneys, law students, and others who work with the homeless.

July, 2013 – from Alaska, progress in providing online resources for self-represented litigants. Stacey Marz of the Alaska Court System reports on “a new court system homepage that highlights ‘Representing Yourself’” and then links to the different self-help websites within the system…. We [also] launched a new self-help website on Probate – Estates. It is very
comprehensive and answers many questions about the different processes as well as provides practical information that people should think about before death and after a loved one dies.”

- 7.15.13 – on a related note, an op-ed looks at the issue of unrepresented parties in Alaska’s civil courts: “In only one third of divorce and custody cases are both parties represented by an attorney. In another third only one party is represented, and in the last third neither side is represented. Many of these cases involve critical safety issues to Alaskan children and families, such as domestic violence and substance abuse. The statistics are even more dire when it comes to housing. Over half of eviction cases in Alaska involve situations where only one party, almost invariably the landlord, is represented by an attorney.” (Full piece in the Anchorage Daily News.)

Pro Bono

- 7.24.13 – “Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman and New York State Bar Association leaders said following a meeting Tuesday that they plan to hold further discussions about the bar group’s objections to a new rule requiring lawyers to disclose pro bono contributions…. The meeting was prompted by a June 26 letter to Lippman in which [State Bar President David] Schraver pointed out that the House of Delegates has been on record since 2004 as being opposed to requiring lawyers to disclose the time and money they donate for pro bono services…. The disclosure requirements were put into effect on May 1 by the administrative board of the courts.” (Short article from the New York Law Journal.)
- 7.25.13 – a little more from Law360. Some pro bono advocates are pushing back against the State Bar’s pushback: “A break between New York’s largest lawyer group and the state’s top judge over a new rule requiring attorneys to disclose pro bono efforts has surprised many advocates of free legal work, who say the bar group’s privacy concerns overstate the amount of public scrutiny that Empire State lawyers will face.”
- 7.22.13 – “At the direction of Indiana Chief Justice Brent Dickson, the Indiana Pro Bono Commission has made a series of recommendations to the Supreme Court designed to increase pro bono activity in the legal community. The key proposal is to implement annual mandatory reporting of pro bono hours by every attorney licensed in Indiana…. Along with mandatory reporting of pro bono hours worked, the group proposed the Indiana State Bar Association establish a pro bono committee in every section. Lastly, the committee suggested that judges be more engaged in pro bono activity, although how that would be done remains a question.” (Article from the Indianapolis Business Journal. The article also notes that Indiana’s IOLTA funding “dropped 90 percent during the past four years from the high of $3 million to the current $300,000.”)
- 7.18.13 – “In an effort to beef up the pro bono contributions of in-house counsel, increase the availability of legal services to those in need and address some nagging questions that may impede the ability of corporate attorneys to pitch in, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman has directed a statewide committee to promptly explore the issues. Lippman announced…the formation of a committee chaired by Court of Appeals Judge Victoria Graffeo and indicated he is looking for recommendations before the year is out. It is expected that the Advisory Committee on Pro Bono Service by In-House Counsel will present proposals to the Administrative Board of the Courts this fall.” (Story from the New York Law Journal.)
- 7.14.13 – “Over $2.1 Million worth of pro bono services were performed as the result of the ‘$1 Million Pro Bono Service Campaign,’ spearheaded by the Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section (CBA-YLS), in collaboration with the Pro Bono Network. The goal of the campaign was to increase pro bono service and awareness throughout the state by facilitating the performance of $1,000,000 worth of pro bono services, the equivalent of 4,000 hours at a rate of $250 per hour. From November 2012 through February 2013, the CBA-YLS solicited and collected campaign pledges from individuals and law firms whereby the participants committed to performing a number of pro bono hours from March to May. Based on the certifications submitted to the YLS, 8768.7 pro bono hours were performed in connection with
the campaign equating to $2,192,175 worth of pro bono services.” *(Story from the Hartford Courant.)*

**Law School Pro Bono/Public Service**

- 7.18.13 – a look at the measures that SUNY Buffalo’s law school is taking to assist students/grads in completing New York’s new 50-hour preadmission pro bono requirement. Among other things, the school is forging closer ties with local legal aid providers, setting up a tracking system, and adding practicum courses. *(Article from the UB Reporter.)*

*Author: Steve Grumm*