Greetings. The latest ATJ news in brief:

- new edition of ABA’s legal aid-focused Dialogue e-magazine
- championing innovations in legal aid service delivery
- IL Bar Foundation announces nearly $250K in civil legal aid grants
- limited right to counsel development in FL
- law practice incubator updates (PA, VT)
- the importance of local and state governments investing in civil legal aid
- in NJ, pro bono attorneys get more leeway to help debtors in bankruptcy proceedings
- in NYC, nation’s oldest legal aid office gets new chief
- call for increased legal aid funding and an ATJ Commission in PA
- MN rolls out online, free legal aid advice portal
- two state supreme court justices weigh in on the role of ATJ Commissions
- PA courts roll out new electronic portals to promote ease of access to court info
- tough news for state legal aid funding in NJ
- new ATJ Commission liaison from TX Supreme Court
- VP Biden hosts Association of Pro Bono Counsel
- developments in supporting self-represented litigants in Canada
- insights on how law firm pro bono counsel can recruit/retain new pro bono volunteers

The summaries:

- 7.12.14 – the latest edition of the ABA’s Dialogue magazine, featuring news on IOLTA funding for civil legal aid, pro bono, and more is available here.
- 7.11.14 – Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation director Lonnie Powers’ latest ATJ piece in the Huffington Post reviews legal aid service delivery innovation: “Demand for civil legal aid continues to outstrip supply. Among attorneys and others in the field, this is known as the ‘justice gap.’ It’s clear that we will never close this gap unless our federal and state funders dramatically increase their support. In the meantime, we must also find ways to expand access to information that can help those in need. While there is no one way to do this, self-help legal centers and smarter use of technology are surely part of the solution.”
- 7.7.14 – “The Illinois Bar Foundation has approved 30 grants totaling $242,500 which will be distributed to nonprofit legal aid organizations statewide.” Here’s the media announcement with the list of grant recipients. Here’s some context on past years’ ISBF legal aid grant info.
- 7.3.14 – a civil right to counsel development in the Sunshine State: “According to HB 561, signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott on June 25, it is mandatory that dependent children with special needs receive an attorney in court. The $4.5 million allocated by the Florida legislature will go towards paying any lawyer who agrees to represent these clients, making legal services available for these children.” (Here’s the news site NationSwell’s article, which leads off with this unfortunate inaccuracy: “Liberty and the pursuit of happiness aren’t the only rights you have in this country. You’re also entitled to an attorney.”)
- 7.3.14 – two incubator updates from PA and VT, respectively:
  - from the Pennlive news website: “Widener Law in Harrisburg and the Dauphin County Bar Association will be working together to launch an incubator program this fall for new lawyers looking to start a solo practice or small law firm.”
  - from the National Law Journal: “Vermont Law School is the latest to follow the solo incubator trend, launching a program with the Vermont Bar Association.”
designated to keep young lawyers within the state and practicing in underserved areas.”

- My colleagues at the ABA’s Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services maintain a good incubator database.

- 7.2.14 – a Florida Times Union op-ed, focusing on the work of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, calls for increased local and state government investment in civil legal aid.

- 7.2.14 – “The Supreme Court of New Jersey on Wednesday said attorneys who offer pro bono representation to indigent debtors in bankruptcy proceedings do not create a conflict of interest if their firm represents an impacted creditor in unrelated matters, bolstering a state legal aid program.” (Password-protected article from Law360)

- 7.1.14 – from the AP: “A lawyer with four decades’ experience at the Legal Aid Society in New York City has been tapped to lead it. It’s the nation’s oldest nonprofit organization providing free legal help to the poor. The society announced Tuesday that Seymour W. James Jr. will be its attorney-in-chief. The 138-year-old Legal Aid Society handles more than 300,000 civil, criminal, and juvenile cases a year.” Mr. James is a member of the ABA’s Standing Committee for Legal Aid & Indigent Defendants.

- 7.1.14 – a PA-based radio show on station WITF featured a sit-down with representatives of the Pennsylvania Civil Legal Justice Coalition, which recently released a report calling for significantly increased legislative funding for legal aid, creating an ATJ Commission, and exploring a limited civil right to counsel.

- July, 2014 – Minnesota is the latest state offering a free, online legal advice portal for income-eligible users. Here’s Minnesota Legal Advice.org.


- 6.30.14 – “Pennsylvania’s judiciary today unveiled the second in a series of interactive, Web-based data dashboards that will allow interested users to quickly analyze and interpret data related to court cases and court operations. The latest dashboards provide a detailed look at civil cases, including individual displays for mortgage foreclosure filings, medical malpractice cases and protection from abuse cases.” (Media release)

  - this is a good development for ATJ generally, and we at the ABA actually funded some work by Washington State’s ATJ Board to facilitate increased electronic availability of court data.

- 6.30.14 – the Star-Ledger reports on New Jersey budget activity, including bad news for civil legal aid funding: “The governor also voided several funding increases Democrats had included for women’s health centers ($7.5 million), legal services for the poor ($5 million), and other areas.”

- 6.30.14 – “Justice Eva M. Guzman has been appointed liaison to the Texas Access to Justice Commission and the foundation that supports the commission’s work to provide civil legal services to the poor. Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht, who had had been liaison to the commission and Texas Access to Justice Foundation since 2010, announced Justice Guzman’s new assignment...” (Media release)

- 6.30.14 – “Vice President Joe Biden expressed his support for law firm pro bono programs during a meeting this month with representatives from more than a dozen firms. Representatives from 15 law firms—members of the Board of Directors of the Association of Pro Bono Counsel—briefed the vice president on a variety of pro bono initiatives, including programs focused on domestic violence, providing legal advice to small businesses, immigration and homeless youth. According to the association, Biden said he supported firms’ efforts to institutionalize pro bono by hiring full-time professionals to oversee pro bono efforts.” (National Law Journal)

- 6.27.14 – Canada’s National Self-Represented Litigants Project’s June newsletter has good updates about NSRLP’s latest undertakings.
6.25.14 – here’s a nice *Metropolitan Corporate Counsel* Q&A with Akin Gump Pro Bono Partner Steve Schulman, including this tip for law firm pro bono counsel: “I think the most important tip I can give is that, as in any other job, a lot of it is just being out there in the community, hearing what is going on, meeting with legal services organizations and understanding what their needs are, but also getting out around the firm, knowing people in the firm and listening to what issues motivate and interest them so that we can find opportunities. I think the biggest tip is resisting the temptation to sit at your desk all day because, like all legal jobs, there’s a lot of emailing and working on the computer. I think the biggest tip for somebody running a pro bono practice is to get out there, get to meet people both within the firm and within the community.”

- on a related note, ABA Pro Bono Committee Chair Mary Ryan has tips for engaging new pro bono volunteers within law firms.