ABA Access to Justice Headlines  
September 2014

September 8

Chicago Dawn (Daniel Schwen)

Happy Monday, lords and ladies. ATJ Headlines returns from its summer hiatus as pale-skinned as ever but otherwise energized and ready for autumn. We’ll use this edition to catch up on late-summer developments. (There is music, too. Great, great music.)

As is customary, before the ATJ news some items of general interest:

- Middle-class America ain’t recovering. From the New York Times “Upshot” blog: “For five years, the [U.S.] economy has been expanding at a steady clip…. Yet public opinion polling shows most Americans still think the economy is pretty miserable. What might account for the paradox? New data from a research firm offers a simple, frustrating answer: Middle-class American families’ income is lower now, when adjusted for inflation, than when the recovery began half a decade ago.”
  - Along similar lines, the Times more recently reported on income-gap data coming out of the Federal Reserve: “Economic growth since the Great Recession has improved the fortunes of the most affluent Americans even as the incomes and wealth of most American families continue to decline, the Federal Reserve said Thursday. For the most affluent 10 percent of American families, average incomes rose by 10 percent from 2010 to 2013. For the rest of the population, average incomes were flat or falling. The least affluent families had the largest decline.
- Opinion writer Thomas Edsall looks at the “expanding universe of poverty capitalism. In this unique sector of the economy, costs of essential government services are shifted to the poor [often when they are criminal defendants]…. N.P.R. reported in May, services that ‘were once free, including those that are constitutionally required,’ are now frequently billed to offenders: the cost of a public defender, room and board when jailed, probation and parole supervision, electronic monitoring devices, arrest warrants, drug and alcohol testing, and D.N.A. sampling.
- Lighter fare. Based on Facebook information, here’s a map showing NFL team loyalties throughout the 50 states. Wow, the Broncos, Cowboys, and Seahawks (they have Alaska, too)
rule over sprawling kingdoms. Good to see my Glorious Philadelphia Iggles Football Franchise maintaining a small but densely populated redoubt in Southeast PA and Downashore NJ.

Okay, the ATJ news. Let’s begin with the Legal Services Corporation turning 40. LSC is using its 40th anniversary to look both backward – at its history and accomplishments – and forward, with a “ground-breaking campaign to expand the impact and capacity of civil legal aid providers across the country.” The campaign focuses on four areas: launching fellowships, integrating technology into service delivery, providing leadership training, and boosting awareness of legal aid.

As for the remaining news, here’s the short-short version, with fuller summaries below. Because of this digest’s length, we’ve also broken stories up topically: ATJ Commission activity, legal aid funding, pro bono, and legal aid service delivery. Enjoy.

- New “outcome evaluations” tool for ATJ Commissions
- Arizona launches an ATJ Commission(!)
- New PA court surcharge hike will fund legal aid
- Funding strains for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (FL)
- Ditto the Mississippi Center for Legal Services
- Bank of America lending-practices settlement with federal/state regulators will produce civil legal aid funding
- Forthcoming research on private lawyers’ perception of, and support for, civil legal aid
- SC Bar Foundation announces $1.9m in FY15 grants
- New pro hac vice fee revenues will support legal aid in GA
- New ABA Resolution supports practice rules freeing in-house counsel to do more pro bono
- Changes in ABA law school accreditation standard on pro bono
- VP Biden calls for pro bono lawyers to aid undocumented minors facing deportation
- The ABA’s 2014 Pro Bono Award winners
- “Legal aid in the news” update from Voices for Civil Justice
- What is the “Innovating Justice Forum”?
- Nat’l. Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (NCCRC) launches shiny new website
- Legal aid funding in Ontario will support law student-run legal aid projects
- Courthouse Assistance Program to launch as pro bono project in Maine
- City of San Francisco funding legal aid for undocumented minors
- The ABA and legal DIY site Rocket Lawyer team up
- The Hacksess to Justice legal aid hackathon produces web-based legal aid tools
- Legal Aid of Center of Southern Nevada launches self-help legal support website
- American Bar Foundation research on why people don’t seek legal help when they should
- Two newly-minted Utah lawyers launch a nonprofit, but fee-generating, law practice
- Is “Legal Aid Legal Services”, doing business in Maryland, actually a legal aid organization?
- Updated ABA white paper on state limited scope-representation (a/k/a “unbundling”) practice rules
- DC court launches a web chat support service
- Georgia Legal Services Program gets ABA honors
- a medical-legal partnership in Ohio
- Equal Justice Works announces Class of 2014 fellows

The summaries:

ATJ Commission Activity
- Sept. 2014 – we just released a new resource for Commissions. The Framework for Outcome Evaluations is a specialized tool offering ATJ Commissions a means by which to assess the impact of their work. Big thanks to legal aid consultant John Tull for his work on this. The man’s also a snazzy dresser.
- 8.22.14 – from the AP: “A new commission will make recommendations on ways to improve access to justice, including use of Arizona’s legal system and obtaining legal representation. Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Scott Bales ordered the formation of the Commission on Access to Justice, naming Court of Appeals Judge Lawrence Winthrop as its chairman. Other members include lower court judges, court officials and legal aid providers.”
  - Press release announcing the Commission’s creation and listing its 18 members.
  - Supreme Court order creating the Commission.

Legal Aid Funding
- 9.2.14 – “A $1 increase in court surcharges that took effect Aug. 8 is generating more revenue to fund legal services for low-income Pennsylvanians, a step in a broader effort to expand access to justice. The money will support the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network which assists the poor in civil cases that often involve domestic violence, eviction and emergency custody issues.” PLAN administers much of the state-based legal aid funding to various providers throughout PA. (The Standard Speaker)
- 8.26.14 – “Jacksonville’s Finance Committee has made the decision to defund legal services to the poor, causing Jacksonville Area Legal Aid to furlough employees one day per week and cut staff salaries by approximately 20 percent. The recent decision could also lead to staff members being terminated.” Since the Florida state government makes no civil legal aid appropriation, JALA has been struggling mightily. (WJXT)
- 8.23.14 – from the Clarion-Ledger in Mississippi, a look at the resource struggles of a provider, and state-based efforts to boost funding: “The Mississippi Center for Legal Services has 18 lawyers to represent low-income people in 43 central and south Mississippi counties. That’s an average of one…attorney for every 21,000 poor people eligible for legal assistance. At its peak of funding, 48 attorneys served the southern half of the state…. [State] House Bill 579…includes a $2.77 special assessment on some misdemeanor fines, generating money for the Civil Legal Assistance Fund. The legislation went into effect July 1.”
- 8.21.14 – civil legal aid providers may benefit in several ways from Bank of America’s $16.5 billion settlement with the federal government over home-lending practices. The settlement funds will go to a variety of federal and state entities which are likely to use them to support legal and other aid to distressed home-buyers. In addition, “If Bank of America fails to live up
to its agreement by [8/31/18], it must pay liquidated damages in the amount of the shortfall to
organizations that will use the funds for state-based Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Account
(IOLTA) organizations and NeighborWorks America, a non-profit organization.” (Imperial
Valley News)

8.28.14 – an argument for greater investment in legal aid to prevent foreclosures:
“The [B of A settlement] agreement includes $30 million for states to distribute to
their legal aid programs. This is encouraging news for the 1.75 million
homeowners who are still in default on their mortgages, as well as the 9.5 million
borrowers who are underwater and at risk of foreclosure. But it’s not
enough…” (Talk Poverty website)

8.29.14 – the Wall Street Journal Law Blog picks up on the importance of the
funding which will be channeled to/through IOLTA administrators.

8.19.14 – the folks at Voices for Civil Justice commissioned research into lawyers’ perceptions
of civil legal aid. The findings, resulting from individual interviews and an online survey of 368
lawyers, are summarized by Voices as follows: “A full report of the findings will be posted next
month. Here are a few headlines:

- Unlike voters, who are largely unaware of civil legal aid, lawyers are nearly
  universally familiar with the term and have solidly positive impressions.

- A strong majority of lawyers – 59 percent – indicate a previous or current
  involvement with civil legal aid as donors or volunteers. By a margin of two to
  one, they are more likely to volunteer their services than to make a monetary
  donation.

- By a margin of 65 percent to 25 percent (with just 10 percent undecided), lawyers
  express initial support for increasing government funding for civil legal aid. With
  29 percent expressing strong support, the intensity in support outweighs all
  opposition among lawyers.

- The new, broader definition of civil legal aid is well received by lawyers,
  especially by those who previously or currently volunteer or donate. In fact, it
  increases support and intensity from already robust initial levels. (See slide 20 of
  this slideshow for a look at the ‘new definition.’)

- Lawyers are less receptive than voters to delivery innovations like self-help
  centers and forms.”

August, 2014 – The South Carolina Bar Foundation is disbursing a total amount of $1.9m in
grant funding among nineteen providers.

7.8.14 – “Georgia’s high court has become the latest judicial body to agree to levy fees against
out-of-state lawyers in order to shore up legal aid programs. The Supreme Court last month
amended its Rule 4 to require that every non-Georgia lawyer applying for permission to appear
as counsel pay a $200 fee per case. The fee went into effect on July 1 and will go directly to the
Georgia Bar Foundation, which financially supports Georgia Legal Services and Atlanta Legal
Aid Society. The Georgia Court of Appeals adopted a similar fee requirement in April. (Daily
Report)

Pro Bono

8.11.14 – “Appellate courts in each jurisdiction should adopt a rule permitting in-house counsel
to provide pro bono services in the jurisdiction in which they work, a new ABA policy
urges. The ABA House of Delegates on Monday adopted Resolution 104B (PDF), calling on
appellate courts to adopt a rule permitting and encouraging in-house counsel already authorized
to practice law, while employed by an organization in a jurisdiction in which they are not
licensed, to provide pro bono services.” (ABA Journal)

8.11.14 – the arm of the ABA that regulates law school accreditation standards has approved
changes that will impact law school pro bono. At present, Standard 302-b-2 requires that
schools provide “substantial opportunities” for “student participation in pro bono activities.” The new language, which appears in a new Standard, 303-b-2, also includes an accompanying interpretation – Interpretation 303-3 – which encourages schools to align their pro bono offerings with the type of work contemplated in Model Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1. Interpretation 303-3 also encourages schools to provide opportunities for students to perform at least 50 hours of pro bono over their law school careers. It’s difficult to summarize this, so here is the redlined version of the Accreditation Standards. See p. 22 et seq. (Here’s National Law Journal coverage of the change.)

8.6.14 – “U.S. Vice President Joe Biden made an impassioned plea to U.S. law firms on Wednesday to free up attorneys to help deal with the surge of Central American children who have entered the country illegally by providing more pro bono representation. At the end of a meeting with about 60 people – some from white-collar law firms, others from nonprofit organizations who work with immigrants – Biden urged lawyers to step up and help deal with a backlog of court cases.” (Reuters)

- 7.31.14 – “Lawyers from the biggest U.S. firms are stepping up to help the tens of thousands of unaccompanied immigrant children fleeing violence of Central America. Their work has ranged from assisting individual children in navigating the immigration system to lobbying state and federal governments.” (Bloomberg News)

August, 2014 – congrats to the 2014 ABA Pro Bono Publico Award winners, who were honored at the ABA’s Annual Meeting last month. The winners, two law firms and three individuals, are:

- Dechert LLP
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Judge Edward M. Ginsburg (retired) * Senior Partners for Justice * Massachusetts
- Alan Howard * Crowell & Moring LLP * New York
- Kermit Lowry * LexisNexis * Ohio

Service Delivery

- 9.8.14 – an update from Voices for Civil Justice on some recent, national media stories that mention legal aid, along with insight on how to engage media about the work of civil legal aid providers.

- September, 2014 – I recently came across the “Innovating Justice Forum”, an online platform dedicated to supporting Rule of Law and ATJ developments. They solicit proposals for innovative ATJ solutions. One such proposal, out of the Connecticut civil legal aid community, is for a system that would allow self-represented litigants to participate in computer game-based scenarios to help them understand how the court functions:

- “With no access to affordable legal representation, increasing numbers of people must represent themselves in legal proceedings… We think self-represented parties could benefit from an online interactive “serious game” simulating aspects of an actual legal proceeding. Self-represented parties “are asking for practical tools and skills that they can apply in practice” (Macfarlane, 2013). Games have proven to make a positive impact on cognition and behaviour because they are experiential learning environments that allow users, through trial and retrial, to attain the necessary (virtual) experience that will help guide future action in reality (Steinkuehler, 2013).” (This is actually an LSC TIG-supported project.)

- The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel has a shiny new website with some cool interactive features leading to info on right-to-counsel statutes and rules in the states. Congrats to my main man John Pollock (and collaborators) on this step forward.

- 9.2.14 – News from the North: “Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) is providing over $2 million over three years to six university-operated legal clinics to provide family law services for low-income Ontarians. Starting in September (January for the University of Windsor), four student legal aid
services societies will begin offering family law services. The University of Toronto’s Downtown Legal Services will be using the funds to expand its existing family law division. All of these societies will use a combination of summer students, in-term students and staff lawyers to broaden access to justice by addressing the unmet legal needs of family litigants.”

8.30.14 – “The Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project, with the cooperation of lawyers in Washington County, is getting ready to launch a new legal aid program to serve needy people. The Courthouse Assistance Program will provide legal aid to people on a walk-in, first-come, first-served basis. They will receive a free initial consultation with a volunteer lawyer. People will be screened according to income level using the same guidelines as [LSC grantee organization] Pine Tree Legal Assistance and social service agencies. The new program, which begins in September, will be offered at both county courthouses in Machias and Calais.” (Bangor Daily News)

8.27.14 – San Francisco grabs the bull by the horns in addressing the dilemma of minors who face deportation without legal counsel: “The program [to provide counsel]...makes San Francisco the first California city to offer such legal help. It is an expansion of an existing Right to Civil Counsel program created in 2012 that has so far focused on tenants facing evictions. The city will give $100,000 this year to the nonprofit Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, which will use the funds to provide pro bono legal representation to San Francisco residents facing deportation, including children and families.” (San Francisco Chronicle)

8.11.14 – “The [ABA] is teaming up with a startup whose business model—targeting people who would not otherwise retain an attorney—also challenges the traditional delivery of legal services. As the [ABA] kicked off its annual meeting last week in Boston, it announced a partnership with Rocket Lawyer Inc. intended to help the bar group’s members connect with potential clients online. The goal is twofold: to boost business for lawyers at a time when demand for their services is fairly slack, while expanding access to affordable legal help for small businesses. (Wall Street Journal Law Blog)

8.9.14 – “A disaster-relief mobile app that provides individuals with legal information, resources, and forms for assistance. An interactive tool that calculates whether a user is eligible for indigent legal services, as well as how much prison time criminal defendants face. A game that determines whether a user is in need of legal representation. A website that guides Massachusetts residents through the state’s divorce process. An iOS app that creates legally binding health care proxies and nonbinding living wills. All these tools were created on Thursday and Friday by lawyers and developers participating in the inaugural ‘Hackcess to Justice’ legal hackathon [which took place alongside the ABA Annual Meeting in Boston].” (ABA Journal)

8.8.14 – “Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada has launched a new, user-friendly website for the Civil Law Self-Help Center. The new website can be accessed at www.civillawselfhelpcenter.org. In partnership with the Clark County Justice Courts and the Eighth Judicial District Court, Legal Aid Center runs the Self-Help Center located on the first floor of the Regional Justice Center.” (KSNV)

8.8.14 – new research from the American Bar Foundation (ABF) suggests that people don’t look for legal help in large part because they don’t self-diagnose as having a legal problem: “Using a list of 12 common types of civil justice issues that people are likely to encounter, including employment disputes; financial and housing matters; relationship breakdowns and their aftermath; and personal injury, the ‘Community Needs and Services Study’ determined that individuals seldom turn to lawyers and courts to help them find solutions. But despite the common thinking that people don’t hire lawyers due to concerns about the cost of legal services, the study findings suggest that ‘Americans do not take most of their justice situations to lawyers or courts for another very important reason: they do not understand these situations to be legal’. The findings(PDF) were presented by Rebecca L. Sandefur, a faculty fellow at the ABF…” (ABA Journal)
8.7.14 – a story about two U. of Utah Law graduates who entered into a “demoralizing job market, especially for jobs in public-interest law. So they decided to start a small nonprofit firm of their own, with four full-time equivalents and two part-time volunteers, catering to local, middle-class clients in a creative way. Instead of providing representation for free and surviving on grants, they decided to charge for their services. But instead of charging a flat fee, they index their hourly rates to each client’s income on a simple sliding scale that’s published on their website. As their pricing table shows, a client’s rate is determined only by family size and family income.” (Story, and pricing table, in the The Atlantic)

- Just FYI, this ABA-published book, Reinventing the Practice of Law, includes a chapter on non-profit, fee-generating law practices.

8.1.14 – in Baltimore, an outfit called “Legal Aid Legal Services,” which is not a law office (and thus not a legal aid office), catches the attention of the Daily Record and the Maryland Legal Aid Bureau.

- August, 2014 – the ABA’s newly updated white paper, “AN ANALYSIS OF RULES THAT ENABLE LAWYERS TO SERVE SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS” (a/k/a the “unbundling white paper”) is available. It comes courtesy of the ABA’s Standing Committee for the Delivery of Legal Services. The Committee’s staffers work down the hall from me and eat a lot of my office candy stash. Not as much as the rascals from the Standing Comm. for Legal Aid & Indigent Defendants, though.

7.29.14 – with my thanks to ProBonoNet’s Claudia Johnson for pointing this out: “Washington D.C. Superior Court officials on Tuesday announced a new online Web chat feature where court users can ask questions of court employees about their cases within the civil division. Individuals with cases in small claims court..., landlord and tenant, and civil actions (involving disputes of more than $5,000) can access the various Web chats through the court’s main Web site. The chat was created for the civil cases, which are often tried by individuals who don’t have attorneys. However, court officials said the employees on the other end of the chat, will not be able to give legal advice to questioners about their case. Instead, the employees can answer such questions as the status of their pleading, directions to probate court and other general court process questions. (Washington Post)

7.24.14 – congrats to the Georgia Legal Services Program, which one the ABA Government & Public Sector Lawyers Division’s 2014 Hodson Award for excellence in public service. (Henry Daily Herald)

7.17.14 – in “When Poverty Makes You Sick, A Lawyer Can Be the Cure”, the NYT’s Opinionator blog focuses on the work of the Cincinnati Child Health-Law Partnership (Child HeLP), a collaboration between the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center.

- July, 2014 – Equal Justice Works announced its (huge) Class of 2014 Fellows, many of whom are moving into the civil legal aid community.
Happy Monday, ATJ Enthusiasts, and happy almost Autumn (which is scant hours away). In economics-speak, an “externality” is a side effect of commercial activity that impacts third parties – like industrial waste as a negative externality and, I suppose, IOLTA proceeds funding legal aid as a positive externality. One of the positive externalities this blog produces, the benefit of which inures to me, is to connect me with so many of its readers. And as we approach Fall, which is for me a season imbued with notions of both reflection and renewal, I wish to express my gratitude for your reading this news digest, and for sharing with me the news and new ideas that come from your necks of the woods. Our job is to help you learn from one another, so please keep things coming. Thanks.

Before the ATJ news, and for your consideration:

- Last week the U.S. Census Bureau released 2013 data on income and poverty, as well as medical coverage in the U.S. “The nation’s official poverty rate in 2013 was 14.5 percent, down from 15.0 percent in 2012. The 45.3 million people living at or below the poverty line in 2013…did not represent a statistically significant change from the previous year’s estimate. Median [U.S.] household income…was $51,939; the change in real terms from the 2012 median of $51,759
was not statistically significant. This is the second consecutive year that the annual change was not statistically significant, following two consecutive annual declines. The percentage of people without health insurance coverage for the entire 2013 calendar year was 13.4 percent; this amounted to 42.0 million people.

- My hometown rag, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, urges caution in any celebrations of the poverty rate’s decline. I give you the wonderfully titled editorial, “Taking Leave of Our Census”
- Data nerds: a look at poverty rates, state-by-state and over time, from the Pew Charitable Trusts.
- A look at the Obama Administration initiative to end homelessness among military veterans, which takes a “housing first” approach and then works on health, substance abuse, and other problems which challenge the vets. (*New York Times*)

Also, for the benefit of ATJ Commissions I want to highlight new evaluation and assessment materials that we have just released (with the support of the Public Welfare Foundation and Kresge Foundation). You can find other resources for Commission development and legal aid funding on the ATJ Resource Center’s website.

Okay, ATJ news. First the short, short version:

- Nice self-help video out of OK
- Biglaw looks outside the U.S. for pro bono
- the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland’s positive economic impact
- Legal Aid of Middle Tennessee is focusing on healthcare
- LSC hits the big 4-0
- Lots of news about legal aid for unaccompanied minors
- New Mexico Legal Aid and the new Veterans Justice Project
- Happy 50th, Legal Aid of Western Missouri
- Editorial calls for more gov’t. legal aid funding in FL
- NYC Council establishes a committee focused on ATJ issues
- The latest on the Public Welfare Foundation’s support for ATJ
- Mass. Bar Foundation distributes $1.9m in IOLTA funds
- LSC gets $1.2m grant to fund legal aid disaster support in Midwest
- More LSC – Pro Bono Innovation Fund grantees announced
- Is there fairness in Canadian family courts for self-represented litigants?
- D.C. IOLTA proceeds fell 24% between 2013 and 2014
- “Unbundled Legal Services: A Revolution Whose Time Has Come”
- Regional ATJ hearings taking place throughout NY State
- The ABA’s court-based self-help center census
The summaries:

- Scroll down to view this short, simple, and effective video on how self-represented litigants can use self-help forms and related resources, from Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma. Speaking off, LASO is beefing up its pro bono volunteer ranks to staff courthouse self-help desks, according to the Claremore Daily Progress.

- 9.21.14 – an AP piece running in USA Today notes that many large U.S. law firms engage in pro bono work outside the country.

- 9.20.14 – Legal Services Corp. president Jim Sandman and Legal Aid Society of Cleveland director Colleen Cotter penned a Cleveland Plain Dealer op-ed: “LSC’s funding in Northeast Ohio is leveraged by Legal Aid: for every dollar of federal investment in Cleveland Legal Aid’s work, Legal Aid raises an additional three dollars to fund its operation of 42 full-time attorneys and 1,500 volunteers. The outcomes of that investment are even more significant. Based on data tracked for cases Legal Aid closed in Northeast Ohio, assets and income were increased and debt was reduced for Legal Aid’s clients by a combined $25 million last year. The small federal investment is multiplied many times, helping lift people out of poverty.”

- 9.19.14 – a court decision about Tennessee’s state healthcare program resulted in a glut of cases for the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands: “The case load doubled at a regional free legal center after a federal judge ordered the state to give hearings to those whose TennCare applications were delayed, according to an attorney with the firm.” (Daily News Journal)
  - Speaking of the Legal Aid Society, here’s a piece from The Tennessean about Legal Aid’s medical-legal partnership which involves a clinic staffed by Vanderbilt med students.

- 9.15.14 – the Legal Services Corporation’s 40th anniversary events featured a gaggle of legal luminaries, from Attorney General Holder to Justice Antonin Scalia. A McClatchy story notes that while LSC has its detractors on Capitol Hill, on a fundamental “to be or not to be” level, LSC enjoys support: “[O]n May 29, the House rejected by a 116 to 290 margin an amendment…to eliminate the LSC’s…budget. Tellingly, 104 Republicans joined all 186 voting Democrats to reject the defunding bid.”
  - A short Nonprofit Quarterly piece noted LSC’s founding by a supportive President Richard M. Nixon.
  - Hey, look, John Grisham has LSC’s back. Here’s an op-ed he co-authored with Alex Gulotta, director of Bay Area Legal Aid in CA. (Inside Bay Area)
  - Finally, in Maine the Bangor Daily News noted LSC’s anniversary and the work of Pine Tree Legal Services.

- A lot of news, from both the public and private sector, around serving unaccompanied minors in immigration proceedings:

  - 9.17.14 – From a media release: “Greenberg Traurig, LLP is spearheading “Project Protect,” to train volunteer attorneys to take cases on behalf of immigrant children, commencing with a training open to attorneys from all firms at Pace Law School. The program is the first in what the firm announced as an expansion of its nationwide pro bono initiative on behalf of unaccompanied children in immigration proceedings. In New York City, the firm is again teaming with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) and Columbia Law School to assist unrepresented litigants…at the immigration court’s juvenile docket.”
  - 9.16.14 – the City of San Francisco edges closer to funding legal aid for unaccompanied minors: The City’s Board of Supervisors “voted to draw $2.1
million from a city reserve over the next two years to provide lawyers for undocumented youth and parents with children who are now residing in San Francisco as they await expedited immigration proceedings. That’s about 20 percent of the “rocket docket” cases currently before the federal immigration court here.” (San Francisco Chronicle)

- 9.13.14 – “The Department of Justice and the Corporation for National and Community Service, which administers AmeriCorps national service programs, has awarded $1.8 million in grants to increase the…adjudication of immigration proceedings involving certain [unaccompanied minors]. The grants will be disbursed through justice AmeriCorps and will enable legal aid organizations to enroll approximately 100 lawyers and paralegals to represent children in immigration proceedings.” (Cleveland Advocate) And from the National Law Journal: “The bulk of the [DOJ] grant—$1.2 million— [Equal Justice Works] will share with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc.; Kids in Need of Defense; and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. The remaining $600,000 will go to six legal aid providers around the country.”

- 9.14.14 – an op-ed from New Mexico Legal Aid director Ed Marks and LSC president Jim Sandman highlights a new NMLA veterans project. “[NMLA] recently partnered with the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, the New Mexico Veterans Integration Center and the State Bar Young Lawyers Division to create the Veterans Justice Project. This program provides free legal assistance to low-income veterans and helps them navigate the application process to receive benefits.” The piece goes on to highlight LSC’s and NMLA’s joint embrace of technology innovation, as well as and the funding challenges confronting NMLA. (Albuquerque Journal)

- 9.13.14 – Happy 50th, Legal Aid of Western Missouri! “[H]elping poor people get health care when they are denied coverage. Keeping indigent clients in their homes while a landlord-tenant dispute plays out. Standing up for a domestic abuse victim as she fights for custody or child support. That is what Legal Aid of Western Missouri has done for a half-century now: Provide legal services at no cost to the region’s neediest residents.” (Kansas City Star)

- 9.12.14 – a Tampa Bay Times editorial: “The Legislature should find away to provide funding for the state’s approximately 30 legal aid groups and push the next governor to pay more than lip service to programs that help the poor. Lawyers in Florida are not obligated to do pro bono work. But the state Supreme Court has challenged every lawyer to donate 20 hours per year or give a $350 donation to legal aid groups. In the 2012-13 fiscal year, lawyers donated $4 million, according to Kent Spuhler, executive director of Florida Legal Services. But it is not enough to close the gap. Volunteer hours to legal aid societies are down by 30 percent. More lawyers need to step up and embrace a charge from the One Campaign, a statewide effort to get attorneys to take on at least one pro bono case a year.”

- 9.11.14 – Richard Zora’s ATJ blog notes the “good news that the New York City Council has established a Committee on Courts and Legal Services.” Hear is the Council’s press release.

- 9.10.14 – in the short piece “A New Era for Civil Legal Aid” the Public Welfare Foundation highlights the emergence of ATJ Commissions, which have among other things engaged more judges at legal aid and pro bono supporters, and the importance communicating legal aid’s impact not just within the legal community but to the general public. Here at the ABA we’re proud of Public Welfare’s support of our ATJ Expansion Project.

- 9.10.14 – “The Massachusetts Bar Foundation, which distributes money annually to legal aid organizations, has awarded $1.9 million in [IOLTA-generated] grants for 2014 – an 11.5 percent decline in legal aid grants compared to 2013.” (Boston Business Journal)

- 9.9.14 – “The Legal Services Corporation announced plans today to use a $1.2 million two-year grant to foster strong and sustainable relationships between disaster-preparedness organizations and legal service providers in the Midwest. LSC grantees in ten Midwestern states will be eligible to apply for funding to create a disaster-response plan, and will be selected through a competitive application process. The subgrants will allow each of the successful applicants to
hire a disaster coordinator, who will engage with local community service providers to create a disaster response plan. LSC will also coordinate nationally with FEMA, the American Red Cross, National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster, the American Bar Association, and others to launch a national response network integrating legal services with traditional disaster relief. This project is made possible in part by a grant from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation.” (Media release)

- 9.9.14 – from a media release: “The Legal Services Corporation announced today that 11 legal aid organizations will receive grants from its new Pro Bono Innovation Fund to support projects that develop replicable innovations in pro bono services for low-income clients. Many of the projects use emerging legal aid technology to reach rural populations. Others create extensive pro bono partnerships with local law schools, community organizations, and corporate attorneys. All the projects seek to engage and recruit pro bono lawyers and other volunteers to leverage LSC’s federal funding and increase the resources available to low-income clients.”

- 9.9.14 – from the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family, a blog post pushes back on the idea of promoting self-represented litigation in family law matters: “I’ve noticed that there’s a bit of a slippery slope effect to litigating without counsel, in which the the decision to self-represent, whether a choice was involved or not, seems to trigger a cascade of adverse effects that ultimately result in litigants without counsel achieving worse results in every major area of family law than would have been achieved with counsel.”

- 9.7.14 – from the Washington Post: “As interest rates remain low, a program that relies on interest-bearing accounts to fund D.C. legal aid providers is struggling to raise money…. IOLTA — which pools the interest generated from client funds being held by D.C. lawyers and distributes the money to civil legal services providers in the District — saw revenue fall 24 percent in the fiscal year ending June 2014 compared to the previous year, from $708,794 to $539,898. That figure is a significant drop from the $2.4 million the program generated in 2008.”

- September, 2014 – in “Unbundled Legal Services: A Revolution Whose Time Has Come”, Arkansas ATJ Commission director Amy Dunn Johnson makes the case for lawyers doing more limited scope representation. (The Arkansas Lawyer)

- September, 2014 – for the fifth year, New York Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman is conducting regional public hearings focused on ATJ and civil legal aid issues. The Chief uses the information gathered at these hearings to report to the state legislature and to determine the priorities of NY’s ATJ Commission, which is called the Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York.
  - Speaking of CJ Lippman, Governing magazine has a profile focused on his work to support the civil legal aid infrastructure.

- August, 2014 – the ABA Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services has gathered information on court-based self-help centers throughout the U.S. and released “The Self-Help Center Census: A National Survey.”

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