The SCLAID Centennial Access to Justice Award

This award recognizes two young lawyers, one from a civil legal aid practice and one from a public defense practice, for exceptional achievements on behalf of their clients and/or in advancement of the cause of access to justice. The objective of this award is to highlight and raise awareness of exemplary and innovative work being undertaken across the nation by the next generation of leaders in the fields of civil legal aid and public defense. By broadly disseminating descriptions of the accomplishments of the Award recipients, SCLAID intends to provide insights, best practices, and inspiration to attorneys throughout the public interest community. In addition, by including a scholarship component to the Award to defray student loan expenses, SCLAID is working to raise awareness of the importance of addressing student loan debt as a necessity in the successful retention of young public interest lawyers.

As SCLAID looks back on its history during the centennial anniversary of its founding, this award was created as a means of looking forward through the current contributions and future promise that the best and the brightest young lawyers bring to their work and commitment to the access-to-justice community.

I. Guidelines

A. Criteria

1. The Award shall be given in recognition of the individual attorney’s achievement in one or more of the following areas:
   a. Creation of a significant access-to-justice innovation;
   b. Demonstrated superior effort, exceeding the performance of routine duties, dedicated to providing client representation over a specified period; and/or
   c. Exceptional service to, or support of, the advancement of the cause of access to justice.

2. Nominees must be under 36 years old and/or admitted to practice for five years or less at the time of nomination. If the nominee is a member of a young lawyer Affiliate of the ABA Young Lawyers Division with differing membership criteria, the nominee will still be eligible for nomination by satisfying those differing criteria. If selected as the recipient of the Award, the nominee must be a member of the ABA at the time of receipt of the Award.

3. An Award recipient shall not be nominated for an Award if having received this Award within the past four years. Example: A 2020 Award recipient will not again be eligible for nomination until at least 2024.
B. Nomination Procedures

1. Nominations for the award may be made by any member in good standing of the ABA at the time of submission of the nomination. All nominations must also be endorsed by the executive director (or equivalent) of the organization at which the nominee is employed. An executive director or equivalent can endorse by either serving as the initial nominator or submitting separate letter endorsing the nomination.

2. Nominations must be in writing and shall include the nominating individual’s narrative justification on behalf of the nominee and copies of any documents demonstrating the nominee’s fulfillment of the applicable criteria.
   
   a. Narrative justifications for each entry may not exceed three typewritten pages, using standard margins and no smaller than a 12-point typeface.
   
   b. Supplemental documents should be limited to those substantively supporting the nomination. Submission of administrative documentation (statistical reports, logs, and the like) is strongly discouraged.

3. Award nominations that are submitted should encompass work performed from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019, inclusive. The complete packet of materials described above shall be received in the ABA SCLAID offices by Friday, March 20, 2020.
   
   a. Submissions may be made online at this link.
   
   b. Awards are to be voted on at the April SCLAID Committee meeting;
   
   c. Award recipients are to be notified by May 1, 2020; and
   
   d. Awards are to be presented at the ABA Annual Meeting in August 2020.

II. The Award

A. Elements of the Award

1. The selected Award recipients shall receive the following:
   
   a. A plaque indicating the recipient’s selection as the winner of the SCLAID Centennial Access to Justice Award;
   
   b. A $5,000 scholarship to defray the recipient’s outstanding student loan debt;
   
   c. An expenses-paid trip to the ABA Annual Meeting to attend the SCLAID business meeting and committee dinner; and
   
   d. Public recognition at the ABA Annual Meeting of receipt of the Award.

2. Both the plaque and scholarship check shall be presented at the ABA Annual Meeting. If the recipient cannot attend the Annual Meeting, these items will be shipped to the recipient in August of the award year.
3. Each of the two recipients shall receive a $5,000 scholarship to defray their outstanding student loan debt. If any recipient has no current student loan debt, the recipient shall donate the funds to an access-to-justice-oriented 501(c)(3) organization of his or her choosing. If any recipient has a total outstanding student loan debt in an amount less than $5,000, the scholarship award shall be made in the actual amount of the recipient’s outstanding student loan balance due.

B. Requirements of the Recipients

1. In exchange for the receipt of the award, the recipients shall acknowledge and agree to the following terms and conditions:
   a. The recipient consents to allow SCLAID to disseminate information about the recipient and his/her work through various media channels in the context of receiving the award;
   b. The recipient shall provide proof of payment of the scholarship funds to his/her student loan servicer, or, in the event the funds are donated, proof of donation;
   c. The recipient shall be solely responsible for any tax liabilities that may attach to the receipt of the scholarship funds;
   d. Coverage of expenses related to attendance at the ABA Annual Meeting shall be provided as a reimbursement from SCLAID to the recipient following the conclusion of the recipient’s travel, and the recipient shall provide proof of expenses according to the ABA’s standard reimbursement policies.

2. The Award recipients shall each sign a release and acknowledgement of the terms and conditions following their selection as the Award winners and prior to the ABA Annual Meeting.

Questions? Contact Jason Vail at jason.vail@americanbar.org or 312.988.5755.