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Measuring Civic Literacy

ABA Civic Literacy Report Reveals Gaps in Public Knowledge of First Amendment, Other Topics

Last Wednesday, on Law Day, the ABA released the ABA Survey of Civic Literacy report, based on nationwide research conducted earlier this year. In keeping with the 2019 Law Day theme, "Free Speech, Free Press, Free Society," many of the questions were designed to assess respondents' knowledge of the First Amendment and what rights it protects. The report offers mixed news for those with an interest in civic education. For example, 88 percent of the respondents correctly answered that the U.S. government does not have the right to review journalists' writing before publication. However, 1 in 10 respondents answered that the Declaration of Independence is what put an end to slavery in the Confederate states. An [ABA news item](#) links to the report and many other resources pertaining to Law Day and its theme.

A Look at Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois Offers Compelling Case Study on Legal Tech's Use in Legal Aid

There's been a lot of talk recently about legal tech and particularly about how technology can help solve unmet legal needs. But this is not a new idea, according to Indiana University law professor Bill Henderson. For 36 years, he writes at [Legal Evolution](#), the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois (LTF) has studied how to help stretch legal aid dollars and has launched and funded a number of innovative efforts—and legal tech has always been part of that picture. One example: After noting that in most legal aid offices, documents were still being recreated from scratch on IBM Selectric typewriters, in 1990, LTF began setting conditions for some of its funding, to encourage office equipment upgrades. In a [#LongRead](#) that is well worth the time, Henderson shares highlights from LTF's history up to the present—and what other organizations can learn from it about legal tech and access to justice.

'Hello' vs. 'Please Don't Go': Does Your Bar Do Enough to Welcome New Members?

Member research professional Amanda Kaiser had a revelatory experience recently, when she joined three associations and let two memberships lapse. Two of the associations she joined never sent any welcome email or other onboarding message. The other one invited her to ask the executive director any questions she might have—but then never responded to her follow-up emails and phone call. Meanwhile, when she let two memberships lapse, she received a barrage of emails and one phone call from a telemarketing company, listing all the associations' member benefits and good works, and begging her to stay. Many associations have things backward, she writes: While renewal programs are important, many organizations fail to put enough effort into welcoming their new members. At [Association Success.org](#), Kaiser shares more thoughts about her experiences and about how associations can change their approach and be more effective.

Texas Attorney General Files Amicus Brief Favoring Plaintiffs in Case Against State Bar of Texas

In late April, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed an amicus brief in support of three

attorneys who have sued the State Bar of Texas over alleged use of mandatory member fees toward political and ideological speech. The brief, in support of the plaintiffs in *McDonald v. Longley* (one of several recent *Janus*-inspired lawsuits against mandatory bars), says that the bar violates members' rights by not obtaining affirmative consent before allegedly using mandatory member fees toward these activities, and that there's no justification for the bar to compel attorneys to fund such activities in this way. Paxton also urged that the plaintiffs' motion for partial summary judgment on liability be granted. Texas Bar Board Chair Laura Gibson notes that no other attorney general has filed a similar brief in any of the other states where mandatory bars are being challenged, that the bar's actions are constitutional, and that it is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. [Texas Lawyer](#) has more details about the brief and this closely watched lawsuit.



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