



Hurricane Relief Information

It has been nearly a month since Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, but the devastation remains and will continue to demand our attention for months and years to come. Even as we begin to come to terms with this disaster, Hurricane Rita is now threatening the Gulf Coast. The Section's thoughts go out to all who have been affected by the hurricanes this year – from the eastern shoreline to the Florida Keys and the Gulf Coast, and all those whose practices have been altered because of these disasters – please know that you are in our thoughts.

The ABA and the Section of Family Law stand committed to assist victims of this disaster, from Section members to the legal community to the general public. The ABA has set up a complete disaster relief website, www.abanet.org/katrina with up-to-date information on the most recent developments that impact victims and those wishing to volunteer assistance.

Financial Assistance

While we are all aware of national disaster relief organizations such as the American Red Cross, many lawyers are seeking ways to send help specifically to the legal community. The Louisiana State Bar Association and Mississippi Bar Foundation have set up relief funds to help lawyers get their offices up and running again. A listing of other legal service organizations accepting contributions is available as well. <http://www.abanet.org/katrina/donations.html>

Job Assistance

The ABA eReport's Find-A-Job feature has been updated with a special posting for lawyers displaced by Hurricane Katrina. If you, or your firm has job openings for any attorneys, please use the Find-A-Job board to place a job posting <http://findajob.abanet.org/config/login.asp?url>. Displaced attorneys can search job postings at <http://findajob.abanet.org/katrina>. Both of these services are complimentary.

Office Space

For the many lawyers displaced and trying to continue working there a directory of available office space across the country. In addition, the directory lists the availability of computers, secretaries and other office necessities. Those who have office space available for use are encouraged to post it using an online form. <http://www.abanet.org/katrina/officespacedir.html>

Legal Services

For attorneys wishing to donate their services, a contact form is available. Your desire to help and your information will be shared with FEMA, pro bono projects and state bars who will contact you regarding projects for which they need assistance. <http://www.abanet.org/katrina/volunteers.html>

Child Welfare Law

Unfortunately, many victims of the hurricane are children, now separated from their parents or legal guardians. The ABA Center on Children and the Law is requesting attorneys to volunteer legal assistance specifically in the area of Child Welfare. The Center is starting an HHS-supported project collaboratively with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the National Center for State Courts and welcomes your thoughts on legal issues that

Katrina-affected kids will need assistance with at ctrchildlaw@abanet.org. Sign up to volunteer your services at <http://www.abanet.org/katrina/volunteers.html> or find out more at <http://www.abanet.org/katrina/familychildlaw.html>

Listserv Messages

Finally, the response of Section members to those in need has been extraordinary. The famlawesq listserv immediately saw postings of members looking to help and inquiring after the well-being of colleagues in the area. For the many members who are not on the listserv, below are excerpts of messages from members in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Posted on famlawesq on behalf of Mark Chinn, Jackson, Mississippi

The negative stuff being reported in the media does not tell the whole story of the beauty and resilience of the human spirit. I drove to Pascagoula yesterday to take my friend's possessions out of his flooded house and bring them to Jackson for repair. Many have all of their possessions out on the street with ruined rugs and wallboard. Others have no house left at all. Despite the devastation, I was totally uplifted by the people of Pascagoula. They were of high spirit and in good humor.

As I drove through the several blocks of the waterfront area, every single house had an American flag prominently displayed. Many flags were planted in the pile of rubble that used to be a house. At one house where all that was left was a slab, the owner had taken the time to screw a flag holder in the tree to display the flag.

From my side, I am getting calls and emails from all over the country with prayers and offers of help. Your country is full of great people and they are facing this adversity with great American character.

The Mississippi Bar advises me they are in desperate need of cash for money grants and equipment to help lawyers get their offices up and running again. Cash donations will go directly to help lawyers. Checks can be payable to the Mississippi Bar Foundation and mailed to Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund, c/o Mississippi Bar Foundation, P.O. Box 2168, Jackson, Ms 39225-2168. I would hope that each of you would enclose with your check a letter stating that the money is coming from the brothers and sisters of the Family Law Section of the ABA who care about their brothers and sisters on the coast. Getting business up and running is key to creating momentum of rebuilding and bringing life back to normal. Getting law businesses up and running is absolutely critical to society. After all, lawyers and the justice system are the guardians of civilization. Without us, there is anarchy. God Bless you all and see you in San Diego.

Mark

Chinn & Associates is sponsoring the breakfast at the Fall CLE Conference in San Diego on Thursday, September 29. Mark promises to have Mississippi goods to share the wealth of his home state with all Section members in attendance.



"Pascagoula, Mississippi, Home of the Brave" Monday, September 6, 2005

Posted on famlawesq on behalf of Jim Ortego, Lake Charles, LA

I want first to thank Howard Lipsey and the other 70 or so members of the ABA Family Law Section who have volunteered to help Katrina evacuees.

My office, SWLA Legal Services, is serving as the lead law firm for connecting people with lawyers in Southwest Louisiana. We are not a legal aid agency, we are a not-for-profit law firm, a United Way Agency and Randy Fuerst chairs our Board.

As lawyers our response was the SWLA Legal Services and SWLA Bar Association Katrina Legal Project Plan, which was divided into 3 phases:

1. Make legal services available, by in person contact, to all the people in the Shelters.
2. Spread the Service, primarily by telephone intake, to people in homes and hotels.
3. Offer the service nationwide, by telephone and email, to attorneys assisting Louisianans across the country.

Phase 3 is where members of the ABA Family Law Section are most likely to be involved. We are offering our services, and the services of volunteer attorneys from the SWLA Bar Association, to assist attorneys or other agencies providing assistance to the hundreds of thousands of displaced Louisianans across the country.

While it may not seem obvious to some, many of Louisiana's displaced citizens spread far and wide across the country need access to legal counsel. We have faced questions of a bewildering variety. In family law the most frequent questions include:

- How do my spouse and I now manage our existing custodial orders when we are in different locations (often different states), the children are far from one parent, nobody has a copy of the existing order, we don't have transportation, and the court is not functioning?
- I am a payee/payor of child support. How do I obtain an immediate modification since I am now unemployed and homeless/or how do I get paid now when the payor's company is no longer in existence, the payor's location is unknown to me, the State doesn't know where I am, etc.?
- I have an existing Protective Order but I don't have a copy of it. How do I get it enforced?
- What happens now to my pending claim for...you name it, or what happens to the deadline date I faced for filing my response to the property partition action?

The way that most ABA Family Law Section members could help now is to find out if your community is currently sheltering displaced Louisianans. If so, please find out whether they are receiving any legal assistance from your local legal services office, bar association, non profit law firms, or other lawyers in the area. We are available to provide to any lawyer assisting the

evacuees both specific insight on Louisiana laws, the status of our courts, and additional information concerning other important matters ranging from emergency proclamations of the governor, the 1-800 numbers for all Louisiana insurance companies, published creditor and mortgage payment policies of some Louisiana institutions from the Hurricane area, the status of the summer of 2005 bar exams, special IRS, social security, and other federal pronouncements regarding evacuees, Louisiana Supreme Court Orders, etc.

Obviously there are many areas of law for which we will not have all the answers when first called, but we have access to a variety of resources to help with the problem. I want to make clear that we are determined to assist anyone who calls or emails.

Please feel free to call, or have the attorneys or other individuals assisting the evacuees in your area get in touch with the

KATRINA LEGAL PROJECT

TEL: 1-800-256-1955

FAX: 337-433-2523

email: swllegalservices@yahoo.com or jimortego@yahoo.com

We can also provide you with standardized intake forms and follow up sheets we hope to use to develop a clear picture of the needs of evacuees for any future disaster of this sort. We will be happy to share our data and information, except confidential matters, with anyone who requests it once we can slow down a bit and begin analyzing our own data.

For information on other activities in our area go to www.swlacares.com. The Louisiana State Bar Association also has information at www.lsba.org or 1-800-310-7029.

Jim