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Funding News

➤ **South Dakota Enacts Filing Fee for Civil Legal Services** – On February 19, 2009, South Dakota’s governor signed legislation enacting a filing fee on motions to modify existing final orders in domestic cases, giving South Dakota its first state funding ever for civil legal services. The fees will be forwarded to the Equal Access to Our Courts Commission, which was created during the 2008 legislative session to receive such funds. With the addition of South Dakota, there now remain only two states without any state legislative funding for civil legal aid. For more information about the South Dakota initiative, contact Doug Cummings, Executive Director, East River Legal Services, at E01@erlservices.com or 605/336-9230.

➤ **New Jersey Gains Additional State Legislative Funds in Late 2008 Session** – In December, legal services advocates in New Jersey were able to obtain an additional \$9.2 million in state appropriations to help compensate for significant losses in IOLTA funds. Other states are seeking major increases in state legislative funding to maintain services in the face of IOLTA reductions due to the decline in interest rates, while the strategy in many states is to work to hold the line on the current level of funding, even in a year when states are having trouble balancing their budgets. For additional information on state legislative funding, contact Meredith McBurney, Resource Development Consultant, ABA Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives, at meredithmcburney@msn.com or 303/329-8091.

Pro Bono News

➤ **ABA Releases *Supporting Justice II – A Report on the Pro Bono Work of America’s Lawyers*** – The American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service has completed a follow up study to its 2004 study on national pro bono service. The new study clarifies some of the 2004 findings and establishes an accurate and credible baseline for tracking and measuring individual attorney pro bono activity on a national basis over time. The findings include that 73% of lawyers do *pro bono* work, defined as free legal services to disadvantaged individuals or to the organizations that serve them, as compared to 26.2% of the general population that does volunteer work. The 73% figure is an increase from the 66% of lawyers indicating that they provided free legal services for the disadvantaged in the 2004 study. The most recent study also provides new insight into how to recruit new pro bono attorneys and how to support them in their work. To learn more, contact Jamie Hochman Herz, Assistant Committee Counsel, Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, at herzj@staff.abanet.org or 312/988-5748.

➤ **Bar Associations, Legal Services Providers and Courts Partner to Address Growing Foreclosure Issues** – To address the growing number of foreclosures, bar associations, legal services providers and courts have partnered to deliver legal advice and representation to assist homeowners facing foreclosure. Projects in Ohio, Maryland, New York City, Florida, and other locations train volunteer attorneys to educate consumers about foreclosure alternatives, negotiate with lenders, or provide legal assistance. For additional information about these projects, contact Allyn O’Connor, Assistant Staff Counsel, ABA Business Law Pro Bono Project, at oconnora@staff.abanet.org or 312/988-6398.

➤ **ABA National Pro Bono Celebration Scheduled for October 25 - 31, 2009** – The American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service is planning the first National Pro Bono Celebration. It will be a coordinated national effort to showcase the incredible difference



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that pro bono lawyers make to our nation, to our system of justice, to our communities, and, most of all, to the clients they serve. The legal needs of the poor are local issues, and this nationwide celebration is intended to be local in its focus and impact, as well. The goals of the celebration are to: recognize the pro bono efforts of America's lawyers; recruit more pro bono volunteers; and mobilize community support for pro bono activities. For additional information, go to www.celebrateprobono.org or contact Steve Scudder, Committee Counsel, ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, at scudders@staff.abanet.org or 312/988-5765.

Access to Justice Notes

📌 **Three States Establish New Access to Justice Commissions** – Tennessee, West Virginia and Wyoming have joined the growing lists of states in which Access to Justice Commission have been approved. In Tennessee, the Tennessee Supreme Court announced that it will create a commission on April 4, 2009, in conjunction with the launching of its “Access to Justice Campaign.” In West Virginia, the West Virginia Supreme Court approved a proposal by the incoming chief justice to create a nine-member commission. And in Wyoming, the Wyoming Supreme Court ordered the creation of an 11-member commission on December 11, 2008. With the addition of these three states, there are now 24 jurisdictions that have established ATJ Commissions to improve access to the civil justice system for the indigent. For more information, contact Bob Echols, State Support Consultant, ABA Resource Center on Access to Justice Initiatives, at echols@suscom-maine.net or 207/833-7869.

Washington Update



WASHINGTON UPDATE

On February 25, 2009, the House passed the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009. The bill includes \$390 million for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), which is a much-needed \$40 million increase over last year's appropriation and the same amount recommended by the prior Congress' House and Senate Appropriations Committees. The bill has been sent to the Senate where action is expected shortly.

On February 26, 2009, the Obama Administration released the outlines of its FY 2010 budget. A more detailed budget is expected in early April. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has informed LSC that the budget will include \$435 million for the Corporation.

Participating in ABA Day in Washington 2009, April 21-23, will be even more important this year as bar leaders build relationships with a new Congress and Administration and continue to advocate on behalf of legal services. Register before March 15 to avoid a \$100 late fee. For more information, go to <http://www.abanet.org/poladv/abaday09> or contact Julie M. Strandlie, Director, Grassroots Operations/Legislative Counsel, at jstrandlie@staff.abanet.org or 202/662-1764.

For more information about specific items, call the contact person listed for that item. To contribute items to future issues of LEGAL SERVICES NOW, or for general information about this bulletin, contact Bev Groudine at 312/988-5771, fax 312/988-5483 or e-mail bgroudine@staff.abanet.org.