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Funding News

➤ **Access to Justice Commission Obtains Funding from D.C. City Council** – The District of Columbia City Council voted to appropriate \$3,200,000 for civil legal services for the fiscal year that began October 1, 2006, in response to a request from the D.C. Access to Justice Commission. The funding, which will be distributed by the D.C. Bar Foundation, will provide for more legal services in housing-related matters, make legal services available in underserved areas of the District, create a shared legal interpreter bank, and support loan repayment. The Commission, which was created in 2005 by the D.C. Court of Appeals and whose membership includes leaders of the bench, bar and legal services providers, worked tirelessly to secure this significant victory so quickly after being organized. For further information, contact Sunil Mansukani, Executive Director, D.C. Access to Justice Commission, at Sunil.Mansukhani@dcaccesstojustice.org or 202/344-4441.

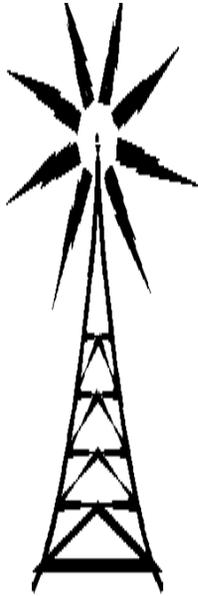
➤ **Minnesota Supreme Court Schedules Hearing on Petition to Amend IOLTA Rule** – On December 12, 2006, the Minnesota Supreme Court will hold a hearing on a petition filed by the Minnesota State Bar to amend the state's IOLTA rule. The proposed amendments include a provision that would require lawyers to maintain IOLTA accounts in financial institutions that pay to IOLTA accounts no less than the highest interest rate or dividend generally available to non-IOLTA depositors when the IOLTA account meets or exceeds the same minimum balance and other account eligibility requirements. As an alternative, financial institutions could pay a benchmark rate equivalent to 80% of the Federal Funds Target Rate for qualifying accounts. The amendments also would eliminate negative netting, define reasonable service fees and clarify which funds are to be placed in IOLTA accounts. For more information about these proposed rule amendments and similar ones that have been adopted in other states, contact Bev Groudine, Counsel, ABA Commission on IOLTA, at bgroudine@staff.abanet.org or 312/988-5771.

Pro Bono News

➤ **New Mexico Supreme Court Assumes Oversight for Pro Bono Plan** – The New Mexico Supreme Court has ordered that the following recommendations of the New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice Report be adopted: 1) that the court adopt oversight of a Pro Bono Plan through the New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice; 2) that the court adopt district court pro bono committees; and 3) that the court support the creation of a funded support staff to be housed at the State Bar of New Mexico and assist in obtaining funding. The New Mexico Supreme Court also ordered that the Commission is authorized to coordinate pro bono recruitment efforts and the development of a website to offer pro bono opportunities. The court referred to its committees for consideration the Commission's proposed rule amendments regarding mandatory pro bono reporting and CLE credit for pro bono. For more information, contact Richard Spinello, Public and Legal Services Director, State Bar of New Mexico, at rspinello@nmba.org or 505/797-6050.

➤ **Increases in Pro Bono Services Documented in Florida** – The Florida Bar's Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Service's June 2006 Report to the Supreme Court of Florida, the Florida Bar, and the Florida Bar Foundation on the Voluntary Pro Bono Attorney Plan is now available to the

public. The report contains the pro bono statistics for the years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. A review of the individual attorney reporting data since the implementation of reporting shows an overall increase in both the number of hours being provided and the number of attorneys providing pro bono legal assistance to the poor. The report can be accessed online at <http://www.floridaprobono.org/library>. For more information, contact Sheila Meehan, Pro Bono Developer, Florida Legal Services, Inc., at sheila@floridalegal.org or 850/385-7900.



WASHINGTON UPDATE

Washington Update

The 109th Congress reconvened on November 13, 2006, following the election, faced with a long list of pending legislation. The most important items on the agenda included completing ten appropriations bills, including the one that funds the Legal Services Corporation. Currently, a series of Continuing Resolutions fund the government until FY 07 legislation is completed. Congressional leaders have resolved to finish the bills before adjourning in mid-December. The House funded LSC at \$338 million; the Senate Appropriations Committee funded LSC at \$352 million. The House/Senate funding difference must be resolved, most likely in an omnibus appropriations bill. The Democrats will control both Houses of Congress when the 110th Congress convenes in January 2007. At press time, leadership positions and committee assignments were still to be decided.

Mark your calendars now for "ABA Day in Washington," which will take place on April 18-19, 2007. This event provides bar leaders with an important opportunity to meet with their members of Congress for increased LSC funding. Co-sponsored by the ABA Section Officers' Conference and the National Conference of Bar Presidents, this event attracts national, state and local bar officials. For more information, contact Julie M. Strandlie, ABA Director of 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.