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Funding News

✎ **State Legislative Sessions are in Full Swing** - Supreme Court Justices, Access to Justice Commission members, and other bench and bar leaders around the country are hard at work, seeking to maintain and/or increase state legislative funding for civil legal aid during the 2013 legislative sessions. Most states are reporting that funding is somewhat easier to maintain than in recent years, as the economies in many states are improving. No new funding has yet been reported, but several states are pursuing increases. An example is Texas, where bills to allow more funds collected by the Texas Attorney General to be used to fund legal aid are moving through Senate and House committees. The current amount is capped at \$10 million; these bills would increase it to \$50 million. They also would expand the source of the funds, which now are from civil penalties, to include civil restitution in actions under consumer-protection, public-health or general-welfare laws. For more information about 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.

✎ **Supreme Court of Louisiana Enacts *Cy Pres* Rule to Benefit Direct Access to the Justice System** – Supreme Court of Louisiana Rule XLIII provides that remaining *cy pres* funds “.....may be disbursed by the trial court to one or more non-profit or governmental entities which support projects that will benefit the class or similarly situated persons consistent with the objectives and purposes of the underlying causes of action on which relief was based, including the Louisiana Bar Foundation for use in its mission to support activities and programs that promote direct access to the justice system.” Louisiana joins 10 other states in having a court rule or legislation that explicitly permits *cy pres* funds in state court cases to go to organizations that fund or directly provide legal services to the poor; four of those states require some percentage of those funds to go to legal aid. *Cy pres* funds have become an important funding source for legal aid during this difficult economic time. For more information about these court rules and legislation, contact Meredith McBurney, Resource Development Consultant, ABA Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives, at meredithmcburney@msn.com or 303/329-8091.

Pro Bono Developments

✎ **Iowa Supreme Court Adopts Emeritus Pro Bono Practice Rule** - The Iowa Supreme Court has adopted an emeritus pro bono practice rule encouraging retired or retiring Iowa attorneys, including attorneys licensed in other states, to provide pro bono legal services to low income persons in Iowa. Emeritus attorneys are granted a limited license to provide pro bono services under the supervision of an approved legal aid organization. There are now 36 jurisdictions with emeritus pro bono practice rules in place. For additional information about the Iowa rule, contact Dave Ewert, Office of Professional Regulation, at bar.admissions@iowacourts.gov or 515/281-8430. For more information regarding emeritus pro bono practice rules generally, contact David Godfrey, Senior Attorney, ABA Commission on Law and Aging, at David.Godfrey@americanbar.org or 202/662-8694.

✎ **Minnesota Supreme Court Adopts Rule Authorizing House Counsel to Provide Pro Bono Legal Services** - The Minnesota Supreme Court amended the Rules for Admission to the Bar to permit lawyers practicing under a house counsel license or a temporary house counsel license to do pro bono work through an approved legal services provider. For additional information, contact Steve Marchese, Pro Bono Development Director, Minnesota State Bar Association, at smarchese@mnbar.org or 612/278-6308.

➤ **South Carolina Bar Pro Bono Program Launches Interactive Website For Pro Bono Legal Help** - The South Carolina Bar Pro Bono Program launched a website that enables individuals who meet certain income and geographical qualifications to post legal questions and have them answered by volunteer attorneys. The website utilizes the OnlineTNJustice.org software and is adapted for South Carolina. Volunteer attorneys will know the name of the individual asking the question in order to check for conflicts. The website can be accessed by going to www.sclawanswers.org. For more information, contact Cindy Coker, Public Services Director, South Carolina Bar Association, at ccoker@scbar.org or 877/797-2227, ext. 142.

Conference of Note

➤ **2013 Equal Justice Conference is Scheduled for May 9-11 in St. Louis** – This annual event, sponsored by the American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, brings together all components of the legal community to discuss equal justice issues as they relate to the delivery of legal services to the poor and low-income individuals in need of legal assistance. The emphasis of this Conference is on strengthening partnerships among the key players in the civil justice system. Through plenary sessions, workshops and networking opportunities, the Conference provides a wide range of learning for all attendees. For more information and to register, visit: www.equaljusticeconference.org.



Washington Update

Last month, Congress approved a funding bill for FY2013 (which ends on September 30th) that funds the Legal Services Corporation at \$358 million, an increase of \$8 million over the FY2012 budget. However, because that amount is subject to sequestration, it is anticipated that the final amount will be reduced by about 5% or close to \$18 million. Regarding the FY2014 budget, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies held a hearing on March 29th addressing LSC's budget request of \$486 million.

The American Bar Association remains committed to increasing funding for LSC in FY2014 so that local legal aid programs can continue their vital work. The Association will once again sponsor ABA Day in Washington, DC on April 16-18, 2013, at which bar leaders from across the country will meet with their Members of Congress to advocate on behalf of LSC funding. For more information, contact Ann Carmichael, Legislative Counsel, ABA Governmental Affairs Office, at Ann.Carmichael@americanbar.org or 202/662-1767.

WASHINGTON UPDATE

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 email Bev.Groudine@americanbar.org.