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Funding News

👉 Preliminary Results Suggest Successful 2015 State Legislative Sessions for Legal Aid -

To date, eight jurisdictions have reported obtaining increases in funding for civil legal aid from their state legislatures during the 2015 sessions. Those jurisdictions and their increases are: Colorado (\$500,000), District of Columbia (\$530,000), Minnesota (\$879,000), New Mexico (\$300,000), New York (\$15,000,000), Texas (\$6,500,000), Utah (\$150,000) and Virginia (\$750,000). Several state legislatures have yet to complete their 2015 sessions, so there may be other increases to come. On the other hand, a few states have reported decreases and/or have indicated that some of their funding is in jeopardy, due primarily to difficult state budget situations. In addition, a number of states report that their state funding from filing fees continues to decline due to a reduction in the number of filings. A final report on the 2015 sessions will be published in a subsequent issue of *Legal Services Now*. To learn more about state legislative funding, contact Meredith McBurney, Resource Development Consultant, ABA Resource Center for ATJ Initiatives, at meredithmcburney@msn.com or 303/329-8091.

👉 Texas Legal Aid Programs to Benefit from Amendment to Legislation on Use of Civil Penalties as Funding Source -

In 2013, the Texas legislature passed the Chief Justice Jack Pope Act, which required that civil penalties - up to \$50,000,000 in any two-year budget cycle - received by the Office of the Attorney General for violations of the Deceptive Trade Practice Act (DTPA) be transferred to the Texas Supreme Court for grants to legal aid programs. This year's amendment expands the Pope Act to require penalties and payments to be transferred for any violation of the Business and Commerce Code, increasing the likelihood that legal aid programs will receive the maximum permitted. This successful effort to amend the legislation was led by Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, Associate Justice and Access to Justice Commission Member Eva Guzman, and ATJ Commission Member Harriet Miers. For more information about these efforts, contact Randy Chapman, Executive Director, Texas Legal Services Center, at rchapman@tlsc.org or 512/637-5416.

Pro Bono Developments

👉 Judges May Encourage Pro Bono Work According to ABA Ethics Opinion -

ABA Formal Opinion 470, issued in May 2015, concludes that judges may sign a letter on the judge's stationery that is then mailed to lawyers to encourage them to meet their obligation to perform pro bono work. The opinion urges judges to consider several factors before sending such a letter, including the number of lawyers who will receive the letter; the number of judges serving the jurisdiction; whether the letter is a personalized correspondence or a general plea to the bar as a whole; whether there will be some form of post-letter monitoring; and the tone of the letter. For more information, contact Dennis A. Rendleman, Counsel, ABA Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility, at Dennis.Rendleman@americanbar.org or 312/988.5307.

👉 Indiana Supreme Court Amends Pro Bono Reporting Rule -

The Indiana Supreme Court has modified the state's pro bono reporting rule, narrowing the focus to measuring only the direct representation provided to indigent litigants. Additionally, the rule was revised to remove a

specific income requirement in favor of “individuals reasonably believed to be of limited means.” For additional information, contact Marilyn Smith, Staff Attorney, Indiana Pro Bono Commission, at msmith@inbf.org or 317/269-2415.

Hot on the Web

👉 **ABA Launches Online Platform to Aid Pro Bono Lawyers Representing Unaccompanied Immigrant Children**

The ABA Working Group on Unaccompanied Minor Immigrants launched the ICAN Yammer group, an online and free mobile application resource. It supports pro bono attorneys new to immigration law and representation of children by leveraging the expertise of mentors and experts nationwide through technology. Yammer is the Microsoft enterprise social network for business. Developed by the ABA in collaboration with [Navigant Consulting, Inc.](http://NavigantConsulting.com) - a specialized, global professional services firm - the ICAN Yammer group is an interactive resource that allows volunteer attorneys and mentors to post questions on legal representation of unaccompanied minors, receive answers from national immigration experts and share documents in specific topic areas, such as U Visas (for crime victims) or Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (for children who are abandoned, abused or neglected). The Yammer group is accessible by invitation only. To receive an invitation or for further information, contact the Working Group at abaican@americanbar.org.



Washington Update

On June 3, 2015, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies (CJS) FY2016 Appropriations bill, which allocates only \$300 million for LSC, a 20% reduction from last year’s appropriation of \$375 million. However, on June 11, 2015, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$385 million for LSC in FY2016, a \$10 million increase over LSC’s current funding and \$85 million more than the House had approved the previous week. The bill must still be considered by the full Senate. If the discrepancy between the House and Senate Appropriations Committee’s numbers remains upon vote of the full Senate, a resolution will have to be reached through a conference committee of the two chambers. When the Senate will act or a conference committee will be convened, if necessary, are unknown at this time.



The ABA will continue to advocate for adequate funding for LSC. For more information on the ABA’s efforts, contact Ann Carmichael, Legislative Counsel, ABA Governmental Affairs Office, at Ann.Carmichael@americanbar.org or 202/662-1767.

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 312-932-6425 or email Bev.Groudine@americanbar.org.