

Funding News

✎ **State Legislatures in 14 Jurisdictions Increase Funding for Legal Aid during the 2014 Legislative Sessions** - 2014 was a good year for state legislative funding. Colorado, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Utah, Vermont and Washington reported increases in appropriations. Connecticut, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and West Virginia had increases in court fees and fines. The increases total approximately \$25,000,000. The biggest increase once again was in New York, where Chief Judge Lippman continued to be instrumental in increasing the appropriation for civil legal aid, this year by an additional \$15,000,000. On the negative side, three states reported losses based on legislative actions, and several states that receive their state funding through filing fees reported reductions due to a decline in the number of filings. For more information about state legislative funding for legal aid, contact Meredith McBurney, Resource Development Consultant, ABA Resource Center for ATJ Initiatives, at meredithmcburney@msn.com or 303/329-8091.

✎ **IOLTA Income and Grants Continue to Decline** - Data collected by the ABA Commission on IOLTA reveals that in 2013, national IOLTA income was \$77 million. That figure represents a 7% decline from the previous year. Unfortunately, national IOLTA income has not been that low since the late 1980's. This decline in income is due to the continuing historically low interest rates and lower principal balances in IOLTA accounts. In 2013, national IOLTA grants totaled \$80 million, with \$73 million funding the provision of legal services to the poor. Total IOLTA grants declined by 13% between 2012 and 2013 largely due to declining IOLTA income, as well as because many IOLTA programs had exhausted their reserves, which were used to help keep grants a bit more stable in the past. For more information, contact Bev Groudine, Counsel, ABA Commission on IOLTA, at Bev.Groudine@americanbar.org or 312/988-5771.

Pro Bono Developments

✎ **Department of Justice Expands Pro Bono Opportunities for Its Staff** - On October 22, 2014, in conjunction with the ABA's National Celebration of Pro Bono, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that he had amended the Department of Justice's pro bono policy to allow *any* DOJ employee to take up to 30 hours of administrative leave for *pro bono* work whenever necessary during work hours. In his remarks to the Department's staff announcing the change he observed that, "[t]his demonstrates the value that this Department places on your commendable desire to serve. Indeed, it reflects my long-held view that legal aid is much more than a professional responsibility. It is also a personal obligation, a national duty, and a moral imperative that is central to our nation's founding promise of 'equal justice under law.'" For more information about government attorney pro bono policies and opportunities, contact Cheryl Zalenski, Director, ABA Center for Pro Bono, at Cheryl.Zalenski@americanbar.org or 312/988-5770.

✎ **State Bar of Michigan Launches Patent Pro Bono Project** - The State Bar of Michigan Intellectual Property Law and Pro Bono Initiative launched the Patent Pro Bono Project to connect low-income inventors with patent professionals. The program is part of a national initiative of the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office. Michigan is the 22nd state in which such pro bono services are available. For more information about the Michigan initiative, contact Rob Mathis, Pro Bono Service Counsel, State Bar of Michigan, at RMathis@mail.michbar.org or 517/346-6412.

👉 **Boston Bar Association Releases Report on Civil Legal Aid** - The Statewide Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Aid in Massachusetts released "Investing in Justice: A Roadmap to Cost-Effective Funding of Civil Legal Aid in Massachusetts." The report notes that Massachusetts law firms currently provide tens of thousands of hours in pro bono legal services. The report reveals that an annual \$30 million in new state funding is required to bridge the gap between existing resources and what is needed to assist all eligible persons. It further notes that an increase in legal aid funding will leverage significant pro bono activity by private attorneys that would not otherwise occur. For additional information, contact Eric Fullerton, Digital Marketing Manager, Boston Bar Association, at efullerton@bostonbar.org or 617/778-1906.

Conference of Note

👉 **2015 Equal Justice Conference is Scheduled for May 7-9 in Austin, Texas** - It is never too early to mark your calendars for this annual event sponsored by the American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. This conference brings together all components of the legal community to discuss equal justice issues as they relate to the delivery of civil legal services to those living in poverty who are in need legal assistance. The emphasis of this event is on strengthening partnerships among the key players in the civil justice system. Through plenary sessions, workshops, networking opportunities and special programming, the Equal Justice Conference provides a wide range of learning experiences for all attendees. For more information and to register, go to www.equaljusticeconference.org.



WASHINGTON UPDATE

Washington Update

Congress began its lame duck session on November 12, 2014. It had previously passed and the President signed a continuing resolution (CR) that keeps the government funded at essentially the current levels through December 11, 2014. By that date, Congress will either need to pass an Omnibus Budget for FY15 or another CR to keep the government operating. At this juncture, it is not clear what course Congress will take.

Previously, the U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation that provides \$350 million for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) in FY2015. The Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies (CJS) FY2015 Appropriations bill decreased current funding by \$15 million but is \$50 million more than the House voted to allocate to LSC last year. In June, the Senate Appropriations Committee marked up the FY2015 CJS Appropriations bill at \$400 million, which is \$35 million higher than the current appropriation. The full Senate has not yet taken action on the bill. For additional information regarding the FY15 allocation for LSC, 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.