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Funding News

✎ **For Many States, 2015 has been a Successful Year for State Legislative Funding for Legal Aid** - With most state legislatures adjourned for the year, 12 jurisdictions have reported increases in state funding for civil legal aid, totaling approximately \$26 million. To date, only one state has reported a legislatively enacted decrease (of \$100,000), although several have indicated that funds from filing fees have decreased due to a decline in the number of filings. The 12 jurisdictions with increases are: Colorado, District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington State and Wisconsin. A few states have not yet reported in, so there may be a few more changes prior to the end of the year. 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.

✎ **Increased *Pro Hac Vice* Fee in Louisiana to Help Fund Legal Aid** - The Supreme Court of Louisiana recently increased the *pro hac vice* fee by \$200, from \$250 to \$450. The Louisiana Attorney Disciplinary Board receives the funds, and the increase is then sent to the Louisiana Bar Foundation to distribute to LSC-funded civil legal aid programs statewide. The increase was recommended by the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). There are now 13 states that use some or all of their *pro hac vice* fees to fund civil legal assistance. For more information about the Louisiana *pro hac vice* fee, contact Monte Mollere, Access to Justice Director, LSBA, at mmollere@lsba.org or 504/619-0146. For more information about *pro hac vice* fees for legal aid, 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

✎ **Chicago-Kent College of Law Joins with USPTO to Establish Pro Bono Patent Program to Assist Low-Income Inventors** - Chicago-Kent College of Law and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) have collaborated to establish the Chicago-Kent Patent Hub. The Hub is a pro bono program that will help low-income inventors and small businesses in Illinois obtain volunteer legal assistance from patent agents or attorneys licensed to practice before the USPTO. Efforts to recruit patent attorneys in the Chicago legal community are underway. For more information about this initiative, contact Mary Anne Smith, Director, IIT Chicago-Kent Patent Hub, at patenthub@kentlaw.iit.edu or 312/906-5379.

✎ **Wisconsin Launches Pro Bono Advice Website** - The Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission launched Wisconsin Legal Advice Online (WLAO), a free online service that allows eligible Wisconsin residents to post legal questions for response by volunteer Wisconsin lawyers. Created by the Commission and sponsored by the State Bar's pro bono program, the site enables volunteer attorneys to provide users with brief advice on civil legal questions. Wisconsin's website is the seventh online pro bono advice site launched since the first one, Online TN Justice, was established. (Note: The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service is developing a national virtual legal advice clinic based on Tennessee's Online TN Justice website.) For more information about the Wisconsin website, contact Jeff Brown, Pro Bono Coordinator, State Bar of Wisconsin, at jbrown@wisbar.org or 608/250-6177. For information about the national program in development, contact Cheryl Zalenski, Director, ABA Center for Pro Bono, at cheryl.zalenski@americanbar.org or 312/988-5770.



LEGAL SERVICES NOW

📌 **Toolkits Developed that Enable Pro Bono Lawyers to Provide Financial Literacy and Empowerment to Clients** - The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has developed financial toolkits to educate and assist those who work with consumers to teach financial literacy and empowerment. The toolkits equip pro bono lawyers with the means to help clients with financial issues that can exacerbate their legal problems. The financial education provided in the toolkits is targeted to the client's specific need and most pressing financial problems and are available on the CFPB's website. CFPB is training individuals across the country to be available to train or advise legal services staff, social workers, pro bono lawyers, and others on the content and use of these resources. For more information about the toolkits or to sign up for a training event, contact Mary Griffin, Senior Advisor, Office of Financial Empowerment, CFPB, at empowerment@cfpb.gov or 202/435-7117.

Access to Justice Update

📌 **Supreme Court of Louisiana Establishes ATJ Commission** – In an order dated September 17, 2015, the Supreme Court of Louisiana established the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission as a standing committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). There will be 21 voting members appointed by the president of the LSBA in consultation with the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. The ATJ Commission's mission is to "assure continuity of policy and purpose in the collaboration between the private bar, the courts, and the civil justice community so as to further the goal of assuring that Louisianans, regardless of their economic circumstance, have access to equal justice under law." Currently, more than half of all U.S. jurisdictions have an ATJ Commission or similar body in place. For more details about the Louisiana ATJ Commission, contact Monte Mollere, Access to Justice Director, LSBA, at mmollere@lsba.org or 504/619-0146. For more information about ATJ Commissions generally, contact April Faith-Slaker, Director, ABA Center for Access to Justice Initiatives, at april.faith-slaker@americanbar.org or 312/988-5748.

Washington Update



Now that Congress has reached an agreement to lift the debt ceiling and raise the caps on defense and non-defense discretionary spending by \$80 billion during FY2016 and FY2017, it can turn its attention back to setting FY2016 appropriations for specific programs, including the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). A Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government funded through December 11, 2015 was previously enacted, so unless another CR is passed, Congress will need to approve by that date the Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies (CJS) FY2016 Appropriations legislation, which includes funding for LSC. At this juncture, the House has allocated only \$300 million for LSC, a 20% reduction from last year's appropriation of \$375 million. While the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$385 million for LSC in FY2016, the full Senate has not yet taken up the matter. If the discrepancy between the House and Senate Appropriations Committee's numbers remain upon vote of the Senate, a resolution will have to be reached through a conference committee of the two chambers.



The ABA will continue to advocate for adequate funding for LSC. For more information on the ABA's efforts, contact Thomas Susman, Director, ABA Governmental Affairs Office, at thomas.susman@americanbar.org or 202/662-1765.

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.