

President’s Message

**Louisiana Campaign to Preserve Civil Legal Aid:
*It’s Not Justice If It’s Not Equal***

By Leo C. Hamilton

I am proud to announce that on Jan. 25 the Louisiana State Bar Association’s (LSBA) House of Delegates adopted a resolution supporting the **Louisiana Campaign to Preserve Civil Legal Aid**, a united effort of the leadership of the LSBA and the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF), together with other key Louisiana legal service organizations. The campaign will raise funds for civil legal aid and grow the pool of dollars available for those organizations that provide essential legal services.

My focus this year as president continues to address the critical need for increased funding of civil legal aid in Louisiana. I remind you that civil legal aid provides *free* legal assistance to those who would otherwise go unrepresented. Unlike in criminal cases, there is no constitutional guarantee of counsel in civil cases.

Louisiana’s poverty rates are among the nation’s highest — 19.9 percent compared to 15.9 percent nationally. Nearly one in five

Louisiana residents lived in poverty last year, the third highest rate in the nation. That includes more than 300,000 children.

The Legal Services Corp. (LSC), the largest donor nationally for civil legal aid, has seen funding per eligible client drop by almost 60 percent over the past decade. Louisiana’s civil legal aid programs have lost more than a third of their LSC funding over the last five years, which has resulted in a significant dependence on IOLTA funding from the LBF. Despite that growing dependence, IOLTA funds declined 74 percent between 2007 and 2011, resulting in unavoidable cuts in IOLTA funding directed to legal services for our poorest citizens.



Leo C. Hamilton

With an increasing client base and current funding drastically cut or eliminated, alternate sources of funding are needed to support our civil legal aid programs. Declines in funding, combined with Louisiana’s high poverty, place our already challenged legal aid system in crisis. Our civil legal aid programs will not survive without our help.

Assistance from the legal community is critical to maintaining and developing resources that will provide low-income Louisiana citizens with meaningful access to the justice system. I believe that the oath we took upon becoming lawyers places upon all lawyers, as a profession, the obligation to not only care about civil legal aid, but also to actively do something about it. Please make a commitment to improving the availability of legal services to all citizens by supporting the Louisiana Campaign to Preserve Civil Legal Aid and make a donation at www.raisingthebar.org.

LBF’s Annual Fellows Gala Set for April 11

The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) will honor five distinguished members of the legal profession at the 28th Annual Fellows Gala on Friday, April 11, at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans, 601 Loyola Ave., said 2014 Gala Co-Chairs Kelsey Kornick Funes and Christopher K. Ralston.

The honorees are Distinguished Jurist Carl E. Stewart, Distinguished Attorney Frank X. Neuner, Jr., Distinguished Professors William R. Corbett and Robert Force, and Calogero Justice Award recipient Hon. Robert H. Morrison III.

The gala begins at 7 p.m. and will feature a live auction. A patron party will be held prior to the gala.

Organizers are seeking event sponsors. Proceeds will help strengthen the programs supported and provided by the LBF. Sponsorships are available at six levels. To

review all levels, go to: www.raisingthebar.org.

Individual tickets to the gala are \$150. Young lawyer individual gala tickets are \$100. Gala ticket reservations can be made by credit card at www.raisingthebar.org. For more information, contact Laura Sewell at (504)561-1046 or email laura@raisingthebar.org.

Serving on the Annual Fellows Gala Committee are board liaison Tara G. Richard, Michael B. DePetrillo, Carla Tircuit Dillon, Michael D. Ferachi, Lauren E. Godshall, Steven F. Griffith, Jr., Jan M. Hayden, Colleen C. Jarrott, Chauntis T. Jenkins, Karli Glascock Johnson, Hon. C. Wendell Manning, John H. Musser IV, Adrian G. Nadeau, Kelsey L. Meeks, John D. Sileo, Sarah E. Stogner, Laranda Moffett Walker and Sharonda R. Williams.

Discounted rooms at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans are available for \$219 a night for Thursday, April 10, and Friday, April 11. Reservations must be made before Friday, March 21, to get the discounted rate. Call the hotel directly at 1-888-421-1442 and reference “Louisiana Bar Foundation” to make a reservation or go to: <http://resweb.passkey.com/go/LAbarfoundation2014>.

**Louisiana Bar Foundation
Announces New Fellows**

The Louisiana Bar Foundation announces two new Fellows:

- Hon. Joy Cossich
Lobrano..... New Orleans
- Jennifer H. Johnson..... Monroe