

President's Message

LBF is Like a Good Gumbo: First Start with a Roux

By Leo C. Hamilton

As Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) president, the first order of business was to travel our state and give Fellows an update on the Foundation. We visited Monroe, Shreveport, Alexandria, Morgan City, Mandeville, Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, Lafayette and New Orleans for our annual events. I truly enjoyed meeting new people and seeing old friends and, of course, sampling the good food from around our great state.

I can compare the Foundation to a good gumbo. You start with a roux: basic funding from IOLTA. In April, the board approved \$2.5 million in annual sustaining grant funding for the new fiscal year. The grant budgets prioritize direct legal representation and continue to promote other, important aspects of the LBF mission. The LBF has administered the IOLTA program since 1985.

Next, you add the seasoning trilogy: new sources of funding, mortgage servicing settlement, Children in Need of Care and *Cy Pres*. As of May 1, the LBF is serving as administrator of funding on behalf of the Office of the Louisiana Attorney General for the federal mortgage servicing settlement. This program provides just over \$1.5 million to the LBF for grants to the legal services corporations, Louisiana Appleseed and the Louisiana Civil Justice Center. Free legal representation to affected consumers is available including but not limited to the homeless; veterans; service members and the unemployed in matters including financial counseling; wrongful foreclosure; foreclosure relief; loan modification; principal reduction; refinancing; foreclosure prevention and mediation; and bankruptcy. As administrator, the LBF will provide governance and oversight of the funds and will ensure program and financial compliance.

The LBF continues to serve as administrator for the Child in Need of Care Program providing free legal representation to children in foster care. Last fiscal year, the program provided representation to 3,482 children, made more than 12,000 court appearances on their behalf, and participated in more than 2,600 family team conferences.

In September 2012, the Louisiana Supreme Court adopted Rule XLIII (43), which names the Foundation as a permissible recipient of *Cy Pres* funds. The LBF is the only organization specifically identified in the new rule. We thank the court for its continued commitment to ensure access to equal and fair representation of the indigent. Because of the tremendous need for civil legal aid for low-income people in Louisiana, *Cy Pres* awards can go a long way toward meeting the need for legal services.

Finally, you add flavor: our volunteers. We have many people who give so much



Leo C. Hamilton

of their time, talent and financial support. Our volunteers show their commitment to the betterment of our profession and the community as a whole. I look forward to working more closely with them this year.

All of these ingredients working together allow the Foundation to support free civil legal aid for the poor in all 64 parishes. As we move forward into the next fiscal year, I plan to build on that great gumbo recipe. My focus as president will be to increase the resources available to address the critical need for civil legal aid in Louisiana. With an increasing client base, current funding drastically cut or eliminated at the federal level, and flat interest rates, alternate sources of funding are needed to support Louisiana's civil legal aid programs. These programs make all the difference to needy families — the difference between staying in a home and living on the street; between a safe family and a life of fear and violence; between getting paid earned wages and having nothing to eat. We will work to increase funding to preserve essential legal services for those who would otherwise go unrepresented.

Ralston Receives LBF President's Award

Christopher K. Ralston, a partner in the New Orleans office of Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P., received the Louisiana Bar Foundation's (LBF) President's Award from 2012-13 LBF President



Christopher K. Ralston

Patricia A. Krebs during the LBF's Annual Fellows Membership Meeting.

The award is given in recognition of outstanding support, volunteer service, dedication, and the advancement of the mission and goals of the LBF. Ralston served for two years as co-chair of the Annual Fellows Gala and he currently co-chairs a Development subcommittee.