

President's Message

LBF Establishes Emergency Fund to Support Civil Legal Aid Program

By 2020-21 President Harry J. (Skip) Philips, Jr.

In these unprecedented times, the number of our citizens facing life-changing challenges increases every day. Through no fault of their own, more families find themselves qualifying for civil legal aid and more civil legal issues are surfacing. Civil legal aid is a vital component of the societal response to, and recovery from, the current public health crisis.

The economic impact of the pandemic will have devastating consequences on Louisiana's civil legal aid network. Civil legal aid is free legal advice, representation or other legal assistance provided to low-income and vulnerable people who cannot otherwise afford legal help. The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) is the state's largest funder of civil legal aid.

The efforts by the Federal Reserve to ease other economic uncertainty reduce the amount of money the LBF receives through the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Program, a significant funding source for the civil legal aid net-

work. Approximately 60% (or \$7 million) of the LBF's 2019-20 operating revenue was from the IOLTA Program. We anticipate a 50% decrease in IOLTA revenue in the 2020-21 fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2020.

In addition to the interest rate drop dramatically reducing IOLTA income, the need for civil legal aid will likely balloon as it did after hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and the 2008 economic downturn.

Domestic violence in Louisiana remains an ongoing crisis, without compounding it with additional stress situations in a home. With unemployment on the rise, we will likely see mortgage foreclosure issues, consumer issues from debt collection, and fraudulent government aid scams.



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With the major funding source these programs rely on to provide critical services at risk, the LBF will work to identify additional funding to replace IOLTA revenue.

The LBF has a robust network of well-established partnerships with more than 70 legal aid providers across the state's 64 parishes who are working hard to meet emergency civil legal needs. The LBF stands with our community partners who are working even harder as more families need the help of Louisiana's civil legal aid safety net to recover from the impact of this pandemic. We applaud the civil legal aid programs that continue to serve their missions even when the path forward is unclear.

Please help the LBF support emergency civil legal aid needs. Now more than ever, the LBF needs the continued support of the legal community. For more information, go to: www.raisingthebar.org/EmergencyFund.

LBF Seeking Donations to Emergency Legal Aid Fund

The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) is seeking donations to the Emergency Legal Aid Fund to support civil legal aid needs. The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 has resulted in many Louisiana residents needing support as they face life-changing challenges caused by business closures and illness. The fund will help civil legal aid providers resolve issues such as:

- ▶ missed rent payments leading to eviction notices;
- ▶ disputes over medical and consumer debt;
- ▶ people being wrongly denied public benefits that can keep their families afloat;
- ▶ increased incidents of domestic

violence due to quarantines; and

- ▶ stay-at-home orders resulting in custody issues for minor children and an increase in abuse and neglect cases.

The LBF's Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Program is a significant funding source for the Louisiana civil legal aid network. The efforts by the Federal Reserve to ease other economic uncertainty works in opposition to the IOLTA Program, which directly assists the impoverished and the working poor. As the number of Louisiana citizens eligible for civil legal aid increases, this funding will diminish.

To learn more and donate, go to: www.raisingthebar.org/about-us/newsroom.

LBF Annual Fellows Gala Rescheduled to Spring 2021

The Louisiana Bar Foundation has rescheduled its annual Fellows Gala to spring 2021. The Gala, originally planned for April 3, had been moved to May 15. But, continued concerns for public health in light of the coronavirus, as well as stay-at-home orders in New Orleans and a prohibition against large public and private gatherings through the remainder of 2020, led to the decision to reschedule the event.

The 2019 Distinguished honorees will be recognized at the 2021 event, including Distinguished Jurist Robert H. Morrison III, 21st Judicial District Court; Distinguished Attorney Marcus V. Brown, Entergy Corp.; Distinguished Attorney Mary Terrell Joseph, McGlinchey Stafford, P.L.L.C.; Distinguished Professor John M. Church, Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center; and Calogero Justice Award recipient, Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson, Louisiana Supreme Court.