

President's Message

LBF Poised to Embark on a Strategic Planning Journey

By Judge (Ret.) John C. Davidson, 2024-25 LBF President

Serving as the 31st president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) is a profound honor. Being part of an organization that unites legal professionals to enhance our profession, uplift our communities and enrich ourselves is truly rewarding.

For over three decades, the LBF has been a lifeline, providing crucial funding for civil legal aid. This support is indispensable as we navigate through challenges such as increasing poverty rates and dwindling resources for legal assistance. Our mission to ensure access to justice remains paramount and, together, we can continue to make a significant impact in the lives of those in need.

I am proud to announce that, in April, the board approved \$9.5 million in annual sustaining grants, and we anticipate awarding more than \$14.5 million for the next fiscal year which begins on July 1. These funds, along with countless volunteer hours, allow the LBF to

continue its commitment to ensuring that Louisiana's civil justice system is truly accessible.

In addition to a 24% increase in annual sustaining grants this year, the board and staff worked on plans for the responsible use of increased funding. Over the past few months, we have been able to:

- ▶ grant a one-time salary bonus to Acadiana Legal Service Corp. and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services for all legal services staff.

- ▶ award Lagniappe Law Lab \$125,000 for a project to place self-service kiosks in courthouses in all 64 parishes; kiosks provide access to the Lagniappe Law Lab resources including legal information, referrals to legal aid programs and access to standardized court forms.



- ▶ reserve \$5 million for a future home for the LBF.

- ▶ provide funding to establish LBF Civil Legal Aid Fellowships at Louisiana law schools; the fellowships will be designed to enhance students' interest in civil legal aid careers and build a pipeline of attorneys.

I eagerly anticipate an exciting year ahead, collaborating with our dedicated board, Fellows, volunteers and staff. Together, we are poised to embark on a strategic planning journey this summer, charting a course that will steer our efforts towards a most productive year. With teamwork and strategic vision, I am confident that we will achieve great things and make a lasting impact in our community.

To all our Fellows, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your dedication in sharing your time, skills and support. To those who haven't yet become Fellows, I warmly invite you to join our cause.

LBF Installs New Officers, Recognizes Distinguished Honorees

The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) held its 38th Annual Gala in April at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans to install new officers and to honor distinguished legal professionals.

New officers were installed by Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer. President is Judge (Ret.) John C. Davidson, Alexandria; Vice President Edmund J. Giering IV, Baton Rouge; Treasurer Michael J. Mestayer, New Orleans; and Secretary Charles C. Bourque, Jr., Houma.

Recognized during the Gala were 2023 Distinguished Jurist Elizabeth Erny Foote, U.S. District Court, Western District of Louisiana; Distinguished Attorney Harry J. (Skip) Philips, Jr., Taylor, Porter, Brooks & Phillips, LLP; Distinguished Professor John K. Pierre, Southern University Law Center; and Calogero Justice Award recipient Bernard E. (Bernie) Boudreaux, Jr., Jones, Swanson, Huddell, LLC. These individuals were recognized because they have distinguished themselves in their chosen profession, brought credit and honor to the legal profession, and made significant contributions to the Louisiana justice system.



New Louisiana Bar Foundation officers were installed by Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer. From left, Secretary Charles C. Bourque, Jr., Treasurer Michael J. Mestayer, Vice President Edmund J. Giering IV and President Judge (Ret.) John C. Davidson.