

Building Access to Justice: 40 Years of the Louisiana Bar Foundation

By Edmund J. Giering IV, 2025–26 LBF President



The Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) was originally chartered in 1969 but remained largely dormant until 1985, when then–Louisiana State Bar Association President Judge Eldon Fallon reignited its mission. In his President’s Message in the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, Judge Fallon wrote, “*The Louisiana Bar Foundation offers the members of our bar an excellent opportunity to make a significant contribution to the quality of life of a large part of the citizenry of our state.*”

Inspired by this vision, Judge Fallon revived and amended the Foundation’s charter, established the Fellows program, and launched a voluntary Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) initiative to generate critical funding for civil legal aid. He articulated a bold and enduring mission: “*Organizing and funding projects that provide legal services for the poor, elderly, and mentally impaired will be a top priority of the Foundation. The Foundation will also award scholarships, fund law-related educational programs for the public, promote study, and foster programs that encourage the effective administration of justice.*”

In 1986, the Bar Foundation held its first annual Fellows meeting and dinner, an event that marked a pivotal moment in strengthening its membership, expanding its philanthropic reach, and laying the groundwork for decades of impact. Forty years later, as President

of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, I am proud to say that Judge Fallon’s ideals and goals continue to guide our work.

The Foundation awarded its first IOLTA grants in 1989, distributing \$153,057 to 18 organizations and ushering in a new era of active grantmaking. In 1990, IOLTA became mandatory by order of the Louisiana Supreme Court, further strengthening the Foundation’s ability to serve. Since that time, LBF has distributed more than \$148 million in grants to nonprofit partners providing vital legal services to low-income and vulnerable populations throughout Louisiana.

Over the ensuing decades, LBF expanded its programs to include access-to-justice initiatives, educational outreach, and community partnerships, ultimately becoming the largest funder of free civil legal services in Louisiana. The Foundation also assumed fiscal administration of critical statewide programs, including the Child in Need of Care (CINC) program, which provides legal representation to children in foster care.

Today, LBF proudly partners with more than 70 organizations across the state, supporting free civil legal aid for housing stability, survivors of domestic violence, family law matters, consumer protection, and many other essential needs, all while touching the lives of hundreds of thousands of Louisianans.

Please join us as we celebrate this remarkable legacy. The Louisiana Bar Foundation’s 40th Anniversary Gala will take place Friday, April 17, 2026, at the Four Seasons Hotel New Orleans, honoring four decades of leadership, stewardship, and unwavering commitment to meaningful access to justice.

At this special celebration, we will recognize our 2025 Honorees:

► **Distinguished Jurist:**

Hon. Dana M. Douglas

► **Distinguished Attorney:**

Michael A. Patterson

► **Distinguished Professor:**

Monica Hof Wallace

► **Calogero Justice Award:**

Hon. Freddie Pitcher, Jr. (Ret.)

We invite you to join us as a sponsor to commemorate this milestone and to demonstrate your commitment to advancing justice through the work of the Louisiana Bar Foundation.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact us at (504) 561-1046 or gala@raisingthebar.org. We are deeply grateful for your continued support and look forward to celebrating this historic 40th Anniversary Gala with you.