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Letter to the Editor

Education Key to Making Informed Legal Decisions, LSBA Says

In light of the April 20 oil rig explosion and subsequent oil spill, the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is working with other state legal entities to disseminate information to residents about attorneys' duties and responsibilities, as governed by the Louisiana Rules of Professional Conduct, specifically in the area of client solicitation following accidents and disasters.

In view of complaints already being investigated about improper behavior by some lawyers (most from out-of-state), the LSBA stresses that education is the key to making informed legal decisions.

To advance this education effort, the LSBA has partnered with the Louisiana Civil Justice Center. The Center's free consumer legal assistance hotline can be accessed at (504)355-0970 or (800)310-7029, Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Assistance is also offered in Spanish. The intake specialists will provide general information about the Rules, in addition to fielding its regular calls on various civil legal issues.

The LSBA also wants to remove the unfair playing field that may hamper the many Louisiana lawyers who are, indeed, adhering to the Rules. To that end, the LSBA wants citizens to know:

In cases of accidents or disasters, the Rules prohibit attorneys from initiating direct-mail communications within 30 days of the incident. Solicitation of employment through unwanted personal visits or telephone calls by an attorney with whom a person has had no prior association, or someone acting on an attorney's behalf, violates the Rules. Solicitations involving coercion, duress, harassment, fraud, intimidation or undue influence are prohibited.

Anyone targeted by unethical or illegal solicitation or any other Rules violation should contact the Office of Disciplinary Counsel at 1-800-326-8022.

The LSBA will continue to provide an effective, unified voice on issues affecting the fair and professional regulation of the practice of law.

Kim M. Boyle, President
Louisiana State Bar Association