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## **LSBA Hosts Inaugural Access to Justice Conclave**

**NEW ORLEANS**—The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) and Loyola University College of Law hosted the first Access to Justice Conclave in March at the Louisiana Supreme Court. LSBA 2022-23 President Stephen I. Dwyer and Loyola College of Law Dean Madeleine M. Landrieu convened access to justice thought leaders for input on efforts that can have a lasting impact on ensuring assistance for low-income Louisianians with legal issues.

Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer opened the Conclave by addressing the needs for access to justice activities and by commending the Conclave's participants for their deep commitment to serving those who are underserved and underrepresented in many of the state's communities.

The community stakeholders assembled with the following goals:

- engaging new leaders and partners into Louisiana's access to justice work;
- increasing efficiency and impact by strengthening ongoing cooperation, coordination and effective communication among access to justice stakeholders;
- identifying priority projects for increasing access to justice; and
- expanding and coordinating community legal education, outreach and marketing to people with unmet legal needs about the services and resources available.

The event brought representatives from the judiciary and courts, legal community, non-profit legal aid and pro bono organizations, law schools, state and local agencies, and non-traditional access to justice advocates from organizations like United Way and the NAACP.

The range of inputs provided a robust and insightful discussion designed to inform strategic priorities that will guide access to justice efforts by the LSBA and other stakeholders over the next several years. Priority activities discussed included:

- developing partnerships between legal aid and non-legal organizations;
- creating a comprehensive marketing plan to inform the public about existing resources and legal help; and
- expanding community education training to ensure the recognition of legal issues and needs.

With enthusiastic commitment to these priorities from Conclave participants, the LSBA Access to Justice Commission members agreed to accept a lead role in furtherance of these efforts through engagement with willing Louisiana Justice Community partners.

“The Access to Justice Conclave highlights the possibilities that arise from coordination of efforts and resources to reduce barriers to accessing the legal system. In Louisiana, a great many of the parties in our civil courts are self-represented and face unique challenges to their pursuit of justice,” Chief Justice Weimer said. “The Conclave is a commendable demonstration of the human infrastructure essential to improving the system infrastructure that serves our underserved communities. I sincerely appreciate and applaud the efforts of the leadership of the Louisiana State Bar Association, including President Steve Dwyer and Executive Director Loretta Larsen, Loyola College of Law Dean Madeleine Landrieu and so many others for initiating and promoting the Conclave,” he added.

“The Access to Justice Conclave has brought new partners together and produced tangible next steps to address Louisiana’s most challenging barriers to accessing legal help. We expect this to become an annual event,” LSBA President Dwyer said.

*The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 23,000 members in the practice of law. The statewide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state’s residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.*

*The Louisiana Access to Justice Commission is a Louisiana Supreme Court-created committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association dedicated to a coordinated and systemic approach to ensuring the public’s access to the legal system.*