

Focus on Access to Justice

For more information, visit www.lsba.org/atj.

2026 Pro Bono Publico and Children's Law Awards Nominations

The Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Access to Justice (ATJ) Department is accepting nominations for the 2026 Pro Bono Publico and Children's Law Awards. These awards honor outstanding contributions to pro bono legal work across multiple categories. Recipients will be honored at the Louisiana Supreme Court in May 2026.

Award Categories

Career Public Interest Award

This award recognizes an individual who has devoted at least 10 years to public interest legal work, demonstrating excellence, leadership, and service to the poor and disenfranchised.

Century Club Award

This award recognizes Louisiana attorneys who provided over 100 hours of verified pro bono service in the previous calendar year (Jan. 1, 2025–Dec. 31, 2025) through an established pro bono organization.

Children's Law Award

This award honors an attorney or organization for outstanding contributions to children's law.

David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award

The most prestigious LSBA Pro Bono Award honors a Louisiana attorney who has demonstrated a lifetime commitment to pro bono services.

Friend of Pro Bono Award

This award honors individuals (attorneys or non-attorneys), law firms, or organizations that have significantly enhanced pro bono services in Louisiana. Direct provision of legal services is not considered.

Law Student Pro Bono Award

This award recognizes a law student from each ABA-accredited Louisiana law school who has demonstrated exceptional dedication to providing legal services to the poor.

Pro Bono Publico Award

This award recognizes attorneys or law firms for providing exceptional pro bono services that exceed the aspirational goal of 50 hours of service per year, as outlined in Rule 6.1 of Louisiana's Rules of Professional Conduct.

Submission Guidelines

For information about eligibility for the Pro Bono Publico and Children's Awards and to submit a nomination: www.lsba.org/Nominations/NominationAnnouncements.aspx. Nominations must be submitted online by Friday, Feb. 20, 2026.

The nomination forms require a detailed explanation of how the nominee meets the award criteria. Supporting materials, such as résumés, letters and clippings are encouraged, as selections are based on the nomination packet. Multiple nominations are permitted. Incomplete or noncompliant nominations will not be considered.

For assistance, contact ATJ Coordinator Bridget Berins at Bridget.Berins@lsba.org. ♦

6th Annual Disability Law Training Series

The Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities and Accessibility Committees jointly hosted the 6th Annual Disability Law Training Series.

The hybrid training was held on Dec. 5, 2025, in New Orleans and was designed to ensure that all attorneys, even those

who may only occasionally encounter disability-related issues, are well-equipped to serve the public and fulfill the duties of the profession.

Judge John A. Keller of the 22nd Judicial District Court presented on "Mental Health and Court Involvement."

Other session topics were "Beyond the Individual Trust: Leveraging Pooled Trusts to Access and Preserve Benefits in Elder and Disability Estate Planning," presented by Jason Asbill of Louisiana Guardianship Services, Inc., and "Court Accessibility and Attorney's Responsibility," which was presented by Melanie Bray of Disability Rights Louisiana and Caitlin Morgenstern of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

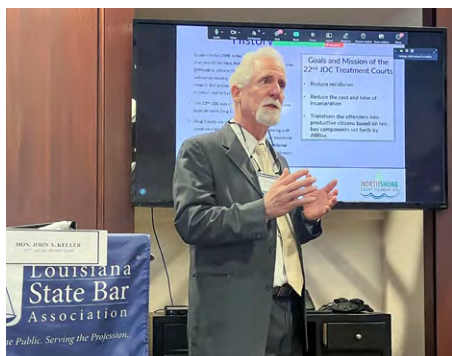
This year's training was also interpreted in its entirety by New Orleans Sign Language Services.

The Disability Law Training Series



Jason Asbill of Louisiana Guardianship Services, Inc. presented "Beyond the Individual Trust: Leveraging Pooled Trusts to Access and Preserve Benefits in Elder and Disability Estate Planning."

was well attended and brought together private and public interest practitioners from across the state. ♦



Judge John A. Keller of the 22nd Judicial District Court presented on "Mental Health and Court Involvement."

ATJ Department's 2025 Top Accomplishments

As we look back on 2025, the Access to Justice Department extends its sincere gratitude to the supporters and partners who worked alongside us to advance access to justice for all. This past year marked the Access to Justice Commission's 10th anniversary, celebrating a decade of coordinated efforts that have expanded access to legal services. While the year brought both challenges and opportunities, through strong collaboration we made meaningful progress. Below are just a few of our shared accomplishments.

1 **Record-Setting Volunteerism During National Celebrate Pro Bono Week**

Louisiana marked a record-setting Celebrate Pro Bono Week in 2025 as our Lawyers in Libraries initiative, now in its 12th year, hosted 206 events with 192 volunteer attorneys contributing more than 500 hours of service, reaching every parish through in-person and virtual consultations. In addition, we led and participated in a range of statewide and multistate events, including a Free Legal Answers clinic with Entergy and Baker Donelson, law school presentations, a pro bono CLE for new admittees, and wills clinic in partnership with Louisiana Appleseed.

2 **Brought Pro Bono Leaders Together to Develop Statewide Priorities in a Summit Co-Hosted with the LBF**

The event brought together pro bono leaders, advocates, and program professionals from across the state and the ideas generated and strategic planning developed will be the focus of much of the ATJ's Pro Bono Subcommittee's work this year.

3 **Strengthened Louisiana's Disaster Response Through Coordinated Training**

In 2025, the Access to Justice community strengthened Louisiana's disaster response by co-hosting two major events with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services: a 20th-anniversary Hurricane Katrina legal symposium and the third Disaster Law Collaboration Summit. Together, these gatherings brought legal experts, policymakers, and community leaders together to address disaster preparedness, mitigation, recovery, and the long-term legal impacts of past disasters.

4 **Hosted Criminal Justice Summits for practitioners, judges, and stakeholders in Baton Rouge and Natchitoches**

The LSBA's Criminal Justice Committee expanded its statewide engagement by hosting two regional summits that brought together prosecutors, defenders, judges, law enforcement, and policy advocates to address emerging issues in Louisiana's evolving criminal legal landscape. By holding events in both South and Central Louisiana, the Committee strengthened accessibility and collaboration to ensure that these conversations reached practitioners across the state.

5 **Conducted Trainings for Law Students on Their Role in Advancing Access to Justice**

ATJ delivered trainings at Southern University Law Center, Loyola University College of Law, and LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center to educate students on how they can help bridge the justice gap as future attorneys. The sessions emphasized the growing need for affordable legal services and highlighted pathways for meaningful involvement, including joining the Modest Means Directory and offering limited scope representation.

6 **Celebrated 22 years of statewide public-interest training for civil legal aid attorneys through the Louisiana Justice Community Conference and its Child In Need of Care (CINC) Pre-Conference**

This multi-day event brought together 150 civil legal aid attorneys from across the state to strengthen access to justice for underserved communities. This year's theme, "Tools for Effective Advocacy in a Changing Legal Landscape," guided 15 sessions, including topics related to CINC, emerging legal developments, organizational strategies, and practical advocacy skills among others.

7 **Hosted 6th Annual Disability Law Training Series**

For the first time, the Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities and Accessibility Committees jointly hosted the 6th Annual Disability Law Training Series, a hybrid event designed to expand the legal profession's understanding of issues affecting persons with disabilities and those with language access needs. This year's sessions covered topics such as the intersection of mental health and the judicial system,

pooled special trusts, and attorneys' obligations to secure interpreters.

8 **Expanded Rural Access to Justice Through Justice on the Geaux**

Justice on the Geaux events led by Acadiana Legal Service Corp. held in DeRidder, Lake Providence, Ferriday, and Harrisonburg brought free civil legal services and education to 74 community members. Participants received guidance on family law, successions, and veterans' services, and engaged with partner organizations to learn how to access legal resources and support in their communities.

9 **Held Third Annual ATJ Conclave to Support Judicial and Community Collaboration**

The event brought together judges, legal professionals, and community leaders from across Louisiana to advance coordinated strategies for closing the civil justice gap. This year's program highlighted expanded judicial engagement, strengthened partnerships with community organizations, and promoted scalable models and tools, including the Civil Legal Navigator, LEAP Law Talks, and statewide legal resource portals, to deepen collaboration and improve access to justice statewide.

10 **Updated IFP Resources Released to Address Statewide Access-to-Justice Challenges**

As part of this year's top achievements, the ATJ Committee, building on a decade of work with Louisiana Appleseed and recent input from its IFP Working Group, released an updated In Forma Pauperis White Paper and a new Reference Card to help judges, clerks, and attorneys address persistent IFP challenges across the state.

These accomplishments are made possible by the dedication of hundreds of attorney volunteers and the ongoing work of Louisiana's civil legal aid and pro bono organizations. Together, they play a critical role in ensuring access to justice across the state. The Louisiana State Bar Association remains committed to working alongside the Civil Justice Community to strengthen the legal profession and serve the public. To learn more, go to: www.lsba.org/atj. Read about the 10th Anniversary of the ATJ Commission www.lsba.org/goto/10AnnATJcommissionArticle. ♦