

# Focus on *Access to Justice*

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## Golob and Lagniappe Law Lab receive LSBA 2020 Civil Legal Aid Awards

**A**manda J. Golob and Lagniappe Law Lab are the recipients of the 2020 Civil Legal Aid Awards, presented for the sixth year by the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Access to Justice Program.

The two awards — the Legal Service Innovation Award and the Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award — were established by the LSBA's Board of Governors in 2015 to recognize the commitment and dedication of legal aid attorneys and organizations providing access to critical civil legal services.

**Lagniappe Law Lab** received the Legal Service Innovation Award, recognizing an innovative program and/or service that effectively meets the legal needs of vulnerable populations in Louisiana. The project must serve as a replicable model for other advocates in the justice community.

Lagniappe Law Lab (LLL), established in 2019, is a non-profit organization that uses technology, design-thinking and operation principles to narrow the access to justice gap for people who cannot afford legal representation. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, LLL worked tirelessly to create online legal information applications that help people prevent eviction, access COVID-19 stimulus funds and unemployment, and support the small businesses community during the downturn.

Through this process, LLL created the COVID-19 Economic Impact Navigator, the Rent Relief Letter Generator and the CARES Act for Small Business Tool. LLL worked with the American Bar Association to launch the COVID-19 Economic Impact Navigator, which has been used 750 times. The Rent Relief

Letter Generator has been used 2,200 times. When people cannot afford legal assistance or find a trusted source for information, they can seek assistance through these apps, shared by local organizations, for free help. Providing legal information about what to expect, how to obtain stimulus funds/rental advocacy/small business assistance, and how to use this information to plan for basic necessities during the lockdown has been crucial for vulnerable populations in Louisiana and LLL has made this information available through its innovative online applications.

**Amanda J. Golob** received the Legal Service Excellence in Advocacy Award, recognizing an individual advocate who has displayed the highest level of dedication, passion and professionalism in representing vulnerable clients.

Golob has been a practicing public interest attorney since starting in 2009 as a Disaster Fellow with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS). After six years in SLLS's Housing Law Unit, Golob was promoted to managing attorney and, under her leadership, the unit has become a trusted and reliable source of service and information that the public has turned to, especially during the public health crisis. Golob's team has been featured in state, local and national media more than 40 times since March 2020 to shine light on the eviction crisis. She engages in direct case work, policy advocacy and community legal education and continues to work non-stop as the Unit's




Amanda J. Golob



caseload increased 300% since the onset of COVID-19.

Golob's leadership and team have impacted thousands of people through Facebook live events, trainings for judges and strong advocating strategies to protect tenants. Over her career and her own casework, she has protected the housing rights of nearly 5,000 people and secured or prevented the loss of more than \$4.2 million in economic benefits connected to housing.

"The LSBA is honored to recognize Amanda Golob and the Lagniappe Law Lab for their tireless advocacy and innovative programming," said LSBA President Alainna R. Mire. "The impact of the pandemic and Hurricanes Laura and Delta have placed an even greater emphasis on the need for dedicated, passionate advocates and organizations to serve the demand for legal services. Thank you for your service," she added.

Nominations for the 2021 Civil Legal Aid Awards will be accepted in July 2021. Bar members are asked to consider nominating a person or organization based on the criteria in the application. Questions or comments can be emailed to Jordan Maier, [jordan.maier@lsba.org](mailto:jordan.maier@lsba.org). 

# Strategic Plan through Justice for All Initiative to focus on “Civil Legal Deserts”

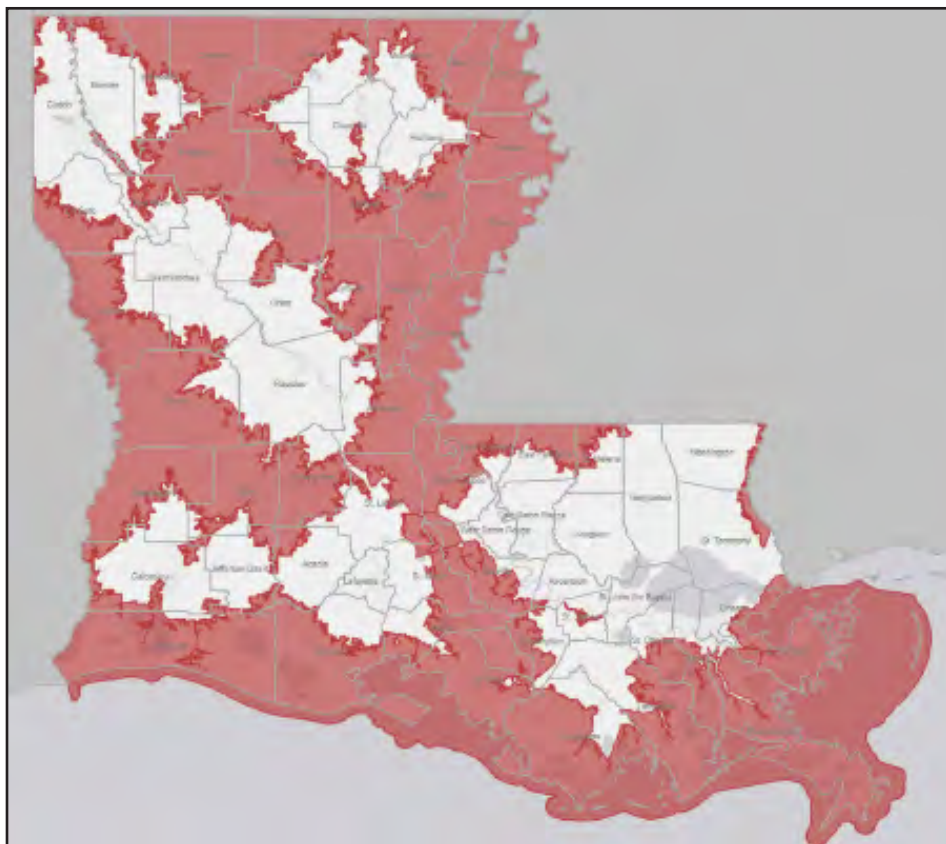
The Louisiana Access to Justice (ATJ) Commission was one of three agencies to be awarded the Justice for All (JFA) project, currently funded by The JPB Foundation, in 2019. JFA is a project of the National Center for State Courts designed to support states in reaching 100% meaningful access to justice through a three-phase process: 1) inventory assessment, 2) gap analysis and 3) strategic planning.

An advisory committee, representing a broad range of industries, state agencies and organizations, helped carry out the phases of the project and presented a strategic planning report to the ATJ Commission. The report includes mapping, developed through geo-information systems, that shows “Louisiana Civil Legal Aid Deserts.”

The findings in the inventory assessment revealed that nearly 15% of the state’s population lives in “civil legal deserts.” These are areas where great barriers to in-person legal services and online resources exist.

In the accompanying map, areas designated in red represent places where in-person civil legal help (at either a civil legal aid office, law library or self-help center) is at least a 45-minute drive away. These areas also frequently have high rates of poverty and limited access to broadband Internet, making civil legal help effectively inaccessible.

Approximately 600,000 people in Louisiana earn below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and reside in an area shaded




in red. The parishes with the highest poverty rates and lack of access to nearby legal aid offices and broadband include much of the Northeast side of Louisiana, such as Concordia, Tensas, Madison and East Carroll parishes. The parishes in red will be considered as sites for this implementation proposal.

The ATJ Commission approved application of a \$100,000 implementation

grant which will be designed to target areas with significant rates of poverty, limited access to broadband, and long drive times to legal aid offices.

To review the Strategic Plan, go to: [www.lsba.org/documents/News/ATJ/JFAStrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.lsba.org/documents/News/ATJ/JFAStrategicPlan.pdf).

For more information about this project and the implementation phase, email Amy Duncan, [amy.duncan@lsba.org](mailto:amy.duncan@lsba.org). 

## LSBA Member Services

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In the past several years, the legal profession has experienced many changes. The LSBA has kept up with those changes by maturing in structure and stature and becoming more diverse and competitive.

For more information,  
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