



FUNDING COMMITTEE REPORT

LOUISIANA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 2020

Mission:

The Funding Committee was established to examine how the Commission might assist in increasing funding to all Louisiana's civil legal aid providers, to study various funding sources and determine the most effective method of securing that funding.

Current Committee Efforts

Following last year's legislative success, the Funding Committee hopes to not only ensure an appropriation in 2020 but expand funding avenues for civil legal aid. Committee members decided to create three working groups which focus on one specific funding initiative. These three avenues are: continuing our state appropriation, collaboration on grants, and the re-examination of our current filing fee statute.

State Appropriation – This has been a major focus of the Committee and members are working to ensure an appropriation for 2020. Adrienne Wheeler with LA Appleseed heads this working group. Haynie & Associates has again been retained as lobbyists to assist with the committee's efforts. This working group will also facilitate additional efforts to educate legislators on the need for civil legal aid funding. March 17th, 2020 will mark the third Civil Legal Aid Day in the Capitol Rotunda where committee members will be on hand with information about Louisiana's civil legal aid network. On the Federal level, committee members are working to set up meetings with Congressional Delegation staff on how to refer constituents to the appropriate civil legal aid organization.

Grant Collaborations – This funding initiative is led by Laura Sewell with the LBF Staff, and was sparked by collaboration on last year's Justice Reinvestment grants. The Justice Reinvestment collaboration group included representatives from the LA Bar Foundation, Southeast LA Legal Services, Louisiana Appleseed, and the LA State Bar Association. The goal of grant collaboration is to identify appropriate grants and collaborate among the various legal aid organizations to apply for and ultimately obtain these grants. In addition, this working group is examining LAIR (Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable) type projects which identify and seek funding to provide the appropriate civil legal aid component for federally funded grants to Louisiana state agencies.

Filing Fees – LA RS 13:1000 allows for courts to voluntarily collect up to \$10 in filing fees to be distributed to a qualified legal aid provider. A number of courts collect this fee, but a much larger number of courts do not. Our third initiative would be to examine whether there are possibilities to increase funding through the filing fee.

In addition to these working groups, Committee members also wanted to recognize the legislators who helped secure the 2019 appropriation. During the LSBA's Midyear Meeting, Senator Franklin Foil accepted the Civil Justice Champion Award. Civil Justice Champion Awards will also be given to Senator Beth Mizell, Senator Eric LaFleur, and Senator Cameron Henry. Senator Foil was recognized at the LSBA House of Delegates event at the Bar's Mid-Year Meeting. Senator Mizell will be presented her award during the February 13th Open House event for the Hammond office of Southeast Louisiana Legal Services.