

FUNDING COMMITTEE REPORT



ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

Committee Members: Chris Ralston, chair, Chief Justice Bernette Johnson, Valerie Bargas, Simone Boustead, Donna Cuneo, Marjorie (Meg) Frazier, Joseph Oelkers III, Jane Sherman
ATJ Staff Liaisons: Monte Mollere and Rachael Mills

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The ATJ Commission, through the work of its Funding Committee, has formulated a plan to increase funding for civil legal aid in Louisiana. The Funding Committee presented an action plan to the ATJ Commission in which it would seek reinstatement of state funding for Louisiana civil legal aid organizations. These efforts will include seeking a direct appropriation in the state budget, with secondary efforts directed at a dedicated fee increase that would have no direct impact on the state budget. A meeting between Funding Committee members and the Governor's staff to discuss the significance of civil legal aid funding resulted in a request for information on the economic impact of civil legal services to the state.

The Louisiana Bar Foundation agreed to fund the study and obtained the services of John Byrnes with Community Service Analysis, LLC (CASCO) who has worked with the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association to conduct similar studies in approximately 30 states. The "Economic Impact and Social Return on Investment of Civil Legal Aid Services for the State of Louisiana" report calculated the economic impact of nearly 40 legal aid organizations throughout the state for fiscal year 2016.

Additionally, to assist with the Committee's efforts, a communications training was conducted by "Voices for Civil Justice" to educate the Commission members on the importance of developing a single communication and messaging strategy for Louisiana's Justice Community. The Commission, at the request of the Funding Committee submitted a resolution to the LSBA House of Delegates. The Commission hopes to obtain approval from the LSBA House of Delegates to seek dedicated funding for Louisiana civil legal aid programs and will use the economic impact study and communications training to support their efforts with the legislature.