



THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

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"To Improve the Justice System and Assure a Free and Just Society Under the Law"

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Open Letter To Members of the Legal Community on the Justice Gap Fund

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"Today, 1.5 million families in California do not have access to lawyers when confronted with legal disputes. This condition exacerbates the anguish of victims of domestic violence, elderly persons swindled out of their retirement nest eggs, and immigrants cheated of their rights. As a community, we need to mobilize the recourse of the legal community to ensure access to justice for all."

[Chief Justice Ronald M. George, quoted in the State Bar's Pro Bono Toolkit.]

Dear Colleague:

The Governor signed AB 2301 establishing the new Justice Gap Fund to help increase legal services for Californians who cannot afford an attorney. On behalf of the State Bar, I'm grateful that the new Justice Gap Fund is being set up this year to help those in desperate need of legal help. I hope you will join me in helping to make it a success.

The new law authorizes the State Bar to ask each attorney to contribute \$100 through their annual fee statement to support critical legal services programs across the state. Every attorney can contribute simply by logging onto our new webpage at <http://calbar.org/justicegapfund>. It includes a brochure that explains the new program, as well as a list of the programs that will receive these funds. For more information, contact: justicegapfund@calbar.ca.gov

I hope that you will step forward and support this new effort. For many Californians, legal services mean the difference between losing their jobs, their homes, their family, and ultimately their hope. Already this year, we have begun to address this need by ensuring that financial institutions pay comparable interest on IOLTA accounts, that are dedicated to legal services. But the legal profession needs to do its part now, and take a leadership role. The most vulnerable of our fellow Californians are depending on you.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. And thank you for your generous contribution to the Justice Gap Fund.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey L. Bleich, State Bar President