

AGENDA ITEM

MAY 54-165
Access to Justice Commission –
Addition of Appointing Entity

BCSR
05/15/09
Open/ Action

DATE: April 14, 2009

TO: Members of the Board Committee on Stakeholder Relations
Members of the Board of Governors

FROM: Hon. Steven K. Austin, Chair
California Commission on Access to Justice
Mary Lavery Flynn, Director
Legal Services Outreach

SUBJECT: Commission on Access to Justice – Addition of Legal Aid
Association of California (LAAC) as an Appointing Entity

Executive Summary

The Executive Committee of the California Commission on Access to Justice recommends that the Board approve the addition of the Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC) as an appointing entity to the Commission on Access to Justice. LAAC is a statewide organization whose membership consists of legal services nonprofits that provide critical legal assistance to low-income Californians. LAAC's mission is to strengthen the legal services delivery system through advocacy, training, and support, and to work to achieve equal access to justice. LAAC has been a strong partner of the Commission and its work, and it is appropriate for LAAC to have an official appointment to the Commission.

Background

The Commission on Access to Justice was established by the State Bar in 1996, in conjunction with the other appointing entities listed below. Its mission is to find long-term solutions to the chronic lack of representation available for poor and moderate income Californians. The Commission is pursuing long-term strategies designed to make significant progress toward the goal of improving access to justice, including developing cooperative efforts among judiciary, local bar associations, legal services providers and the broader community. The Commission seeks new resources to expand the availability of legal services advocates and pro bono attorneys as well as systemic improvements that will make the law more accessible to the poor, the near-poor and those of moderate means.

The State Bar makes 10 appointments to the California Commission on Access to Justice; other appointing entities include the Governor, the Attorney General, the President Pro Tem of the Senate, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Judicial Council, California Judges Association, Consumer Attorneys of California, California Chamber of Commerce, California Labor Federation, League of Women Voters, the California Council of Churches, and the Council of California County Law Librarians.

The Executive Committee of the Commission is recommending that The Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC) be included as an appointing entity to the Commission. LAAC was founded by legal services programs in the early 1980's, in response to a community-wide resolution that a statewide organization was needed to help programs collaborate and coordinate on issues of mutual concern. Over the past three decades, LAAC has remained true to its core mission to act as the unified voice for the legal services community, ensure a forum for legal services programs to coordinate projects, and provide high-quality training for legal services advocates. LAAC became increasingly more active since the founding of the Commission on Access to Justice, and the partnership between the two organizations has strengthened the effectiveness of each entity. Currently, LAAC's membership includes over 80 organizational members and over 40 individual members.

As a statewide membership organization of legal services nonprofits, LAAC has three core service components:

- 1) **Advocacy** on behalf of the legal services community on legislative, administrative, and amicus matters;
- 2) **Training** legal services staff by providing high-quality trainings around the state on topics relevant to legal services practice and clients, with particular focus on ensuring access to trainings that are affordable; and
- 3) **Infrastructure** to ensure that IOLTA programs function as a statewide community to communicate, coordinate and collaborate on issues of mutual concern by providing services like the CALegalAdvocates.org web site, listservs and LAAC sections.

LAAC has been one of the partnering organizations, supporting the work of the Commission on several of its projects, and an appointment from LAAC will strengthen and promote the work and goals of the Commission on Access to Justice, the State Bar of California, and the participating legal services programs.

Recommendation

Staff and the Executive Committee of the California Commission on Access to Justice recommend the creation of an appointment to the Access Commission by the Legal Aid Association of California.

Fiscal / Personnel Impact

No additional funds or staff will be required to implement this recommendation.

Board Book and Administrative Manual Impact

Revisions will need to be made to the List of Appointing Entities and the number of members appointed to the Commission on Access to Justice [TAB 15 Appointment Policies and Procedures, Article 8, Section 2]. Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC) will appoint one member, and total number of members will increase to 25.

Rules and Regulations Impact

None.

Proposed Board Committee Resolution

If the Board Committee on Stakeholder Relations concurs with the recommendation of State Bar staff and the Executive Committee of the California Commission on Access to Justice, the following resolution would be in order:

RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of State Bar staff and the Executive Committee of the California Commission on Access to Justice, that the Board Committee on Stakeholder Relations recommends to the Board of Governors that it create an appointment by the Legal Aid Association of California to the California Commission on Access to Justice, effective immediately.

Proposed Board Resolution

If the Board of Governors concurs with the Board Committee on Stakeholder Relations, the following resolution would be in order:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Governors, upon the recommendation from the Board Committee on Stakeholder Relations, approves the creation of an appointment by the Legal Aid Association of California to the California Commission on Access to Justice, effective immediately.