

President's Message

Updates on Major Projects for the New Term

By Alan G. Brackett, 2022-23 President

I'm excited to begin this year as Louisiana Bar Foundation (LBF) president. The LBF has been fortunate to have extraordinary leadership over the past three decades and I'm humbled to serve. As the Foundation has matured, it's time to take the next steps to ensure its mission is fulfilled, both today and in the future. In the coming year, our Board will be focused on institutional advancement. Raising funds to support the operations of the LBF is critical to ensure that the funds in our care — whether from IOLTA accounts, Children in Need of Care funding, the general appropriation from the Legislature or other sources — can go directly to provide legal services to the tens of thousands of people in need in our state.

I'm extremely proud that the LBF Board has approved \$3.69 million in annual, sustaining grants to support the civil legal aid network this year. We anticipate awarding close to \$8.5 million for social justice initiatives for the 2022-23 fiscal year. These funds, along with countless volunteer hours, allow the LBF to continue its commitment to ensuring that Louisiana's civil justice system is truly accessible.

Civil legal aid is free legal advice, representation or other legal assistance provided to low-income and vulnerable people who cannot otherwise afford legal help. The number of our citizens facing life-changing challenges increases every day. Through no fault of their own, more families find themselves qualifying for civil legal aid. Without civil legal assistance, these Louisiana citizens often experience serious consequences, including losing custody of their children, being evicted from their homes, being subject to domestic violence, and struggling to recover from natural disasters.

The LBF remains the trusted authority for and the state's largest funder of civil legal aid. Our decades of experience as a

responsible steward of funds, along with our well-established partnerships across all 64 parishes, has allowed us to help hundreds of thousands of Louisiana citizens gain access to the legal system.

As a high-poverty state with ever-limited resources, Louisiana's civil justice system has been in crisis for years. The tremendous economic fallout from the pandemic has had a devastating impact on Louisiana's civil legal aid network and drastically increased the number of people who cannot afford legal help.

This year, we will work towards increasing grant funding and services in communities statewide. We will strive to expand the delivery of legal representation to civil legal aid clients, supporting the civil legal aid network and our strategic partners, while reducing the LBF administrative cost footprint so more grant funding and services flow into communities statewide.

We are working towards providing support to rural community providers to create access for people living in Civil Legal Resource Deserts. These are high-poverty areas where access to free civil legal services is more than a 45-minute drive. Distance, coupled with high poverty rates and a lack of Internet access, put these regions at the top of the list in need of access to legal services and resources.

Our Pop-Up Tour will start back up in September. LBF leadership will visit each region of our state and highlight civil legal aid, increased client needs and legal deserts. These events will include our regional Community Partnership Panel chairs, local judicial officers, local grantees and other local leadership. I hope you'll join



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us at one of our regional events.

We have strategic partnerships with the Louisiana Supreme Court and the ATJ Commission, and we continue to work with the Governor's office and the Legislature to improve the delivery of legal representation across the state. To expand LBF's reach, we are working directly with local and specialty bars and other organizations with similar missions and goals as the LBF.

We are working to expand services to those served by civil legal aid organizations by improving data collection, quality assurance and federal reporting with the technical assistance of the Lagniappe Law Lab. Launched with LBF funding, Lagniappe Law Lab continues to excel in creating and improving technology to help deliver civil legal aid.

Our newly established Infinity Fund is designed to provide long-term support for LBF operations and meet all the administrative expenses of awarding and monitoring grant awards. This fund will ensure that LBF can meet staffing and operational expenses so that every dollar received for civil legal aid can be granted to our statewide partners and additional services provided for our vulnerable population.

Every day attorneys across this state help Louisiana by helping others. The LBF is the premier public service organization of Louisiana attorneys. Membership in the LBF is a statement of commitment to fairness and equal access to justice for everyone in our state. I hope you will become a part of the LBF. Become a Fellow, join a committee, attend your local Pop-Up event, and support our Infinity Fund. Our work is important to so many people, and while we have an outstanding professional staff, the work of the LBF requires the support and efforts of members of the Bar. Visit www.raisingthebar.org today.