

President's Message

LBF Hall of Fame Spotlight: Judge Eldon E. Fallon

By 2021-22 President Christopher K. Ralston

I am very pleased to announce a new project spearheaded by the Louisiana Bar Foundation's (LBF) Education Committee: *Hall of Fame Spotlight*. The purpose of this project is to honor the achievements of past presidents and others who have excelled in their service to the Foundation and its mission. The subject of our first *Hall of Fame Spotlight* is Judge Eldon E. Fallon. I had the privilege and honor of serving as a law clerk for Judge Fallon after graduating from law school. He instilled in me and other law clerks, interns, externs and others that we have a responsibility that comes with our position. That responsibility includes doing pro bono work and being philanthropic if and when we can. I feel very strongly that Judge Fallon's efforts and philosophy are key to the success of the Foundation.

Before Judge Fallon was nominated to the federal bench by President Clinton, he had a remarkable career as an attorney. A leader in his field, he rose to become the 1985-86 president of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). As the 45th LSBA president, Judge Fallon communicated his philanthropic message to the Bar membership via the President's Message in the *Louisiana Bar Journal* often. In his LSBA presidential interview, Judge Fallon said, "An association of lawyers has two broad purposes: first, to serve its members, and, second, to serve the public as a whole." It was during this time that he became aware of a shift or movement within the Bar. The Bar began to recognize that it had a responsibility not only to its members, but to society in general.

To spearhead the Bar's public service responsibilities, Judge Fallon dusted off the 1969 LBF charter, amended the articles, and set forth the reactivation of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. Judge Fallon said, "Organizing and funding projects that provide legal services for the poor, elderly, and mentally impaired will be



Eldon E. Fallon, 1985-86 LSBA President

a top priority of the Foundation. The Foundation will also award scholarships, fund law-related educational programs for the public, promote study and research and, in general, foster programs that encourage the effective administration of justice. The Louisiana Bar Foundation offers the members of our Bar an excellent opportunity to make a significant contribution to the quality of life of a large part of the citizenry of our state."

At this time, voluntary Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) was successfully implemented in other states and administered by their Bar Foundations. This is a method of generating revenue on otherwise unproductive funds and using that money to fund law-related activities. In Louisiana, this concept was becoming a reality. In 1994, the LSBA House of Delegates and Board of Governors passed resolutions endorsing the IOLTA concept and recommended its adoption by the Louisiana Supreme Court. In 1985, the Louisiana Supreme Court amended Canon 9, DR 9-02, of the

Code of Professional Responsibility to allow voluntary attorney participation in the IOLTA program to be implemented by the LBF.

This voluntary IOLTA program started a revenue stream to finance the administration of the pro bono projects throughout the state. One of the first public service programs of the LBF was the sponsorship of the New Orleans Pro Bono Project. To date, the IOLTA program has generated more than \$100 million in funding for civil legal aid and law-related nonprofit efforts in Louisiana. The Judge's role in establishing the system to direct the interest on IOLTA to nonprofits in the state is a significant contribution that continues to this day.

Judge Fallon offers this advice for young lawyers, "It is important to realize we're in a special relationship with society, they look to us for a lot of their laws, they look to us for a lot of things, and recognize that you have a responsibility to give back."

In closing, I want to thank Judge Fallon for his contributions to our profession. As president of the LSBA, he was so instrumental in the LBF's beginning. He also served as the fifth LBF president before finding his way to the bench. Today the Louisiana Bar Foundation is the state's largest funder of civil legal aid. We partner with a trusted network of more than 70 organizations that lead community-driven efforts to help families facing non-criminal, civil legal challenges. Our goal is to make sure that all Louisianans, regardless of their background or income level, have access to civil legal services they need.



Christopher K. Ralston