# **Public Service Connection**

#### A Newsletter of the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA should use existing programs, and should implement new programs, to improve our members' level of satisfaction with their lives and with the practice of law. In order to implement this goal, the WSBA will work to enhance the culture of service within the WSBA membership.

### **New Stuff**

On April 6, the 2012 License Fee Referendum passed, with the vote totals certified as: 6,449 voting in favor (52%) and 5,890 voting in opposition (48%). The percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots was 43%. The referendum will result in a 26% cut (or \$3.6 million) to WSBA's budget beginning in fiscal year 2013. During the next few months, staff will be working closely with WSBA's Board of Governors to determine how and where this budget deficit will impact programming like the Moderate Means Program.

Please take this opportunity to respond directly to WSBA President Steve Crossland – he has requested input from WSBA members about the following two questions:

- · How can WSBA be of greater value to you?
- How can WSBA better serve the day-to-day practitioner?

You can send responses to President Crossland directly at <a href="mailto:comments@wsba.org">comments@wsba.org</a> and read about the referendum result at <a href="mailto:www.wsba.org/About-WSBA/Governance/Referendum">www.wsba.org/About-WSBA/Governance/Referendum</a>.

In the interim, we are moving forward with WSBA's public service programming. We continue to value your partner-ship in service to Washington's low- and moderate-income populations and look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you for all that you do.

Conference Alert: WSBA, in partnership with the Access to Justice Board, hosts "Our New Economic Reality: The Legal Profession's Role," June 8–10, in Yakima. Join us for a weekend of inspiring and educational session as we explore solutions and build skills to address the ever-growing need for civil legal assistance. Learn about innovative approaches to the practice of law, how to address and maintain work-life balance, and take advantage of this opportunity to network with connect with justice-minded colleagues from around the state. Read full session descriptions and registration details at <a href="https://www.wsba.org/justiceconference">www.wsba.org/justiceconference</a>. Register by May 4 with the special early bird rate of \$199. After May 4, the conference price is \$250, or a law student discount rate of \$99.



## Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project

The Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project is a partnership between WSBA and the Northwest Justice Project which provides pro bono legal assistance to Washington homeowners facing foreclosure. Interested in volunteering? Sign up at www.mywsba.org.

**Foreclosure Prevention Volunteers Needed!** Tacoma-Pierce County Volunteer Legal Services and the Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project need volunteer attorneys to help homeowners avoid foreclosure at a free legal clinic on May 5, 2012, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in Tacoma. Contact Ariel Speser at <a href="mailto:ariels@nwjustice.org">ariels@nwjustice.org</a> to volunteer. The Northwest Justice Project will host a free webinar training for foreclosure prevention clinic volunteers on May 3 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (approved for 1.5 MCLE credits). To RSVP, contact Ariel Speser at <a href="mailto:ariels@nwjustice.org">ariels@nwjustice.org</a>.



### **Moderate Means Program**

Formed through a partnership between WSBA and the law schools of Gonzaga University, Seattle University, and the University of Washington, the Moderate Means Program (MMP) is a statewide reduced-fee lawyer referral service for moderate-income families and individuals in Washington state. Sign up at <a href="https://www.mywsba.org">www.mywsba.org</a> today to get involved.

Thanks to those who participated in the **Moderate Means Program press conference** on April 3. We launched the Moderate Means Program client-facing website (<u>www.moderatemeanswa.org</u>) and were thrilled with coverage in the Seattle Times, Puget Sound Business Journal, and KOMO News Radio:

Seattle Times Column by Jerry Large (4/4/2012): <a href="http://bit.ly/HYSVFc">http://bit.ly/HYSVFc</a>
Puget Sound Business Journal (4/5/2012): <a href="http://bit.ly/Hf3luS">http://bit.ly/Hf3luS</a>
KOMO News Radio Story (Recorded 4/3/2012): <a href="http://bit.ly/lzqCxq">http://bit.ly/lzqCxq</a>

And the press coverage has been a success! Law student volunteers at Gonzaga, Seattle University, and the University of Washington have fielded more than twice the number of requests for MMP assistance and completed more than twice the number of intake interviews than they had been averaging each month during the previous six-month period. Twenty-one new attorneys have signed up to participate with MMP since the press conference.

**Moderate Means Program service in spades!** Since MMP began serving clients in June 2011, we have fielded almost 800 requests for assistance, completed 570 intake interviews, and referred almost 300 cases to participating attorneys. All this work has been done by a team of volunteers under the supervision of a half-time staff attorney at each law school and 70 law students at the three schools combined, working together with 380 MMP attorneys. This early success is truly a reflection of your dedication to serving those in your community without access to legal help. Thank you for your commitment to the program and for making such significant strides toward increasing access to justice for those in need!

**Need training?** Our next live public service training is 8:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m. on Thursday, May 31. Please join us as Skagit County Superior Court Commissioner G. Brian Paxton presents "Identification, Evaluation, and Transfer of Assets and Debts in Dissolution." Visit <a href="https://www.wsba.org/publicservicetraining">www.wsba.org/publicservicetraining</a> to register for in-person or webcast attendance.



### Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee

WSBA's Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee (PBLAC) activities promote and encourage pro bono service and address the administration of justice as it affects indigent persons. Please visit the WSBA website for more information about <u>PBLAC</u> or to volunteer for a <u>WSBA committee</u>, <u>board</u>, <u>or panel</u>.

Long Distance Lawyers Pilot Project Seeks Volunteers: The Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee's Long Distance Lawyer project links attorneys from urban areas with low-income clients from rural parts of the state. Using technology to communicate with and represent clients, lawyer volunteers supplement the pool of pro bono attorneys in rural Washington counties to provide low-income clients access to legal help. To pilot this concept, PBLAC needs attorneys to provide remote assistance for certain types of family law and landlord-tenant cases. If you would like to volunteer, contact WSBA's PBLAC staff liaison Catherine Brown at 206-733-5905 or <a href="mailto:catherineb@wsba.org">catherineb@wsba.org</a>.



### **Washington Young Lawyers Division**

Read about the WYLD programs and contact a chair to learn about current projects and opportunities to volunteer.

The WSBA is pleased to announce the launch of <a href="www.ProBonoWa.org">www.ProBonoWa.org</a>, an online directory of pro bono opportunities around the state. Designed to link attorneys with opportunities to serve low- and moderate-income clients in Washington, <a href="www.ProBonoWa.org">www.ProBonoWa.org</a> will connect attorneys with organizations in need of pro bono attorneys. The WSBA will maintain and update <a href="www.ProBonoWa.org">www.ProBonoWa.org</a>, ensuring that attorneys seeking volunteer opportunities have the most up-to-date information available needed to link their skills with the clients who need it most.

Special thanks to the Northwest Justice Project, Probono.net, and the Washington Young Lawyers Division Pro Bono & Public Service Committee for their invaluable partnership and support to launch <a href="https://www.ProBonoWa.org">www.ProBonoWa.org</a>.

#### **News and Resources**

Note: The WSBA does not promote, sponsor, or otherwise endorse the trainings or programs listed herein. This list is intended for informational purposes only.

"As Foreclosure Problems Persist, Fed Seeks More Fines," by David Maxwell. Federal regulators are poised to crack down on eight financial firms that are not part of the recent government settlement over home foreclosure practices involving sloppy, inaccurate or forged documents. <a href="http://nyti.ms/Hy6glJ">http://nyti.ms/Hy6glJ</a>

"Foreclosure Deal Credits Banks for Routine Efforts," by Michael Williamson. In February, JPMorgan Chase donated a home to an Iraq war veteran in Bucoda, Wash., and Bank of America waived the \$140,000 debt that a Florida man still owed after the sale of his foreclosed home. <a href="http://nyti.ms/GWJVPG">http://nyti.ms/GWJVPG</a>

"Investors Are Looking to Buy Homes by the Thousands," by Jim Wilson. At least 20 times a day, Alan Hladik walks into a fixer-upper and tries to figure out if it is worth buying. <a href="http://nyti.ms/Hlzm4m">http://nyti.ms/Hlzm4m</a>

"More U.S. homes entered foreclosure process in March," by Alex Veiga. More U.S. homes are entering the foreclosure process, setting the stage for a surge in properties repossessed by lenders this year. <a href="http://bit.ly/HT2IXJ">http://bit.ly/HT2IXJ</a>

"Treasury Faulted in Effort to Relieve Homeowners," by Annie Lowrey. A fund to support homeowners in the communities hit hardest by the collapse of the housing bubble has disbursed just 3 percent of its budget and aided only 30,640 homeowners in the two years since its creation, according to a report released on Thursday by a federal watchdog office. http://nyti.ms/Hzj5hb

#### Where Will the Mortgage Settlement Money Really Go?

The \$25 billion mortgage settlement between five banks, the federal government and 49 states calls for approximately \$2.5 billion of the total to be set aside for state foreclosure prevention programs, such as housing counseling and legal services. Yet, at least six states have already said they will put some of the money into their general funds. Similar diversions occurred after the \$206 billion tobacco settlement in 1998. Multiple outlets have noted this story, but CBS News/AP has a useful national summary and The Huffington Post'sBen Hallman reports that Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan is urging states to use the funds for their intended use.

The Brennan Center is working with advocates to make sure the settlement money is spent on cost-effective fore-closure prevention programs. We have a prepared a <u>fact sheet</u> showing why it is bad policy to divert these funds.

**Is your state diverting settlement funds?** Contact Mark Ladov at the Brennan Center at Mark.Ladov@nyu.edu if you need assistance advocating with your state's Attorney General and legislature.

#### **Contact Us**

**News, please!** Do you have success stories, newsworthy items, or additional information for the next Public Service Connection? Please send them to the WSBA at <a href="mailto:publicservice@wsba.org">publicservice@wsba.org</a>.

For more information about WSBA's public service projects, please visit <u>www.wsba.org</u> or contact Public Service Program Manager Catherine Brown at 206-733-5905.

A special thanks to our volunteers! We appreciate your dedication to service, and we value your partnership as we expand the menu of public service opportunities throughout the Washington state legal community.