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\*or the preceding Friday, if on a weekend.

### NEWSLETTER STAFF CONTACTS

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## Legal Aid Needs Us Now More Than Ever

by Tom Sand, MBA President and Andrew Schpak, MBA President-Elect



Tom Sand

The Oregon legal community has a long tradition of contributing time and money to provide legal services for those in need. The challenge of providing access to justice just got tougher. Last month, we learned that the President's proposed budget eliminates funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) beginning in 2018. This development could not come at a worse time: currently one in five Americans are eligible for legal aid, reflecting a 21 percent increase since 2007. Funding from the LSC represents just under 30 percent of legal aid's statewide \$15.5 million dollar budget. The predicament for legal aid in many other states is more severe; we are fortunate that here in Oregon, legal aid has a relatively diversified funding base from over 80 different sources of funding, which is aided in large part by the generous support of our legal community. That said, 30 percent is a substantial reduction. We ask that MBA members dig deeper and do what they can to support legal aid through giving to the Campaign for Equal Justice and to ensure that the voice of those in need is heard by our elected officials.

The right of all people to competent legal representation, regardless of their ability to pay for it, has been a core value of the MBA since it was founded over 100 years ago. Many of our members may not realize how central pro bono service commitment is to the MBA's mission. Minutes from the October 30, 1917 MBA Board meeting reveal the organization's initial steps in representing the interests of low-income individuals:

*"Mr. A.R. Gephart, general secretary of the Public Welfare Bureau ... stated that much work was done for the poor and needy and that many cases came before them requiring the services of an attorney for which they were unable to pay. He requested that the Bar Association cooperate ... by appointing one or more attorneys who would assist without compensation. Upon motion ... the president was authorized to appoint a committee of three."*

In 1935, Alfred Kelley, then President of the MBA, formed a committee to make recommendations about the organization and financing of a legal aid clinic. This committee and



Andrew Schpak

the Legal Aid Committee of the OSB initiated the first successful effort to establish a legal service program in Multnomah County, and in 1936 the first Legal Aid office opened in Portland. In 1980, the Young Lawyers Section of the MBA was formed with Mike Haglund as its founding president. The MBA YLS, with grants from the MBA and ABA, started the Volunteer Lawyers Project which is now housed at Legal Aid Services of Oregon. Today, the MBA bylaws specify that assisting low-income Oregonians is a primary focus of the organization.

History alone is a less compelling reason to support legal aid than the urgent need that currently exists. As Multnomah County grows, the need for legal services for those living in poverty will only continue to increase. Even without the proposed funding reduction, legal aid can only meet the needs of about 15 percent of those who meet the income qualifications. While we may be living in a politically-contentious time, legal aid has enjoyed a long history of strong, bipartisan support. Republicans, Democrats, businesses, and social service agencies in this state have united to rally around LASO as an essential service for a fair and effective justice system. When a large segment of our population loses access to our system of justice, we all pay an incalculable price.

Here are three simple things you can do to help:

- Say that you will stand up for your local Legal Aid office. You can help offset any future cuts by contributing to the Campaign for Equal Justice. <http://www.cejoregon.org/donate-pledge.shtml>
- Volunteer to take on a pro bono matter. There are ample opportunities in a wide variety of areas. The MBA maintains a list of opportunities in Multnomah County at <https://mbabar.org/AboutUs/ProBonoOpportunities.html>. For a list of opportunities in all of Oregon, visit <http://www.osbar.org/probono>.
- Make sure your IOLTA account is with a Leadership Bank working with the Oregon Law Foundation to support legal aid through above-market interest rates. If you are already with a Leadership Bank, please thank them for their commitment

## Calendar

### MAY

**1 Monday**  
CourtCare Campaign begins  
See insert

**3 Wednesday**  
East County Social  
RSVP to [pamela@mbabar.org](mailto:pamela@mbabar.org)

**4 Thursday**  
YOUTHFILM Screening  
[www.mbabar.org](http://www.mbabar.org)

**6 Saturday**  
"Tell It to the Judge" and Legal Information Booth  
[www.mbabar.org](http://www.mbabar.org)

**10 Wednesday**  
June Multnomah Lawyer deadline

**11 Thursday**  
Solo and Small Firm Workshop: Lawyer as Employers  
[www.mbabar.org](http://www.mbabar.org)

**15 Monday**  
Youth, Rights & Justice, The Justice Luncheon  
[www.youthrightsjustice.org](http://www.youthrightsjustice.org)

**16 Tuesday**  
MBA Annual Meeting & Dinner  
[www.mbabar.org](http://www.mbabar.org)

**18 Thursday**  
Tillicum Gathering  
[www.mbabar.org](http://www.mbabar.org)

**19 Friday**  
MBA and YLS Committee Volunteer Forms due  
[www.mbabar.org](http://www.mbabar.org)

**29 Monday**  
Memorial Day Holiday

### JUNE

**8 Thursday**  
Topgolf Social  
See insert

**9 Friday**  
July/August Multnomah Lawyer deadline

**13 Tuesday**  
Solo and Small Firm Social

**17 Saturday**  
YLS Summer Social at Thorns FC Match

SALC Race for Justice  
[www.salraceforjustice.org](http://www.salraceforjustice.org)

### JULY

**4 Tuesday**  
Independence Day Holiday

## mba | EVENT

### New Event!

### Topgolf Social

**Thursday, June 8**  
Topgolf  
5505 NW Huffman St., Hillsboro  
5-8 p.m.

Join us for a fun, new event for people of all golfing abilities!

Enjoy friendly, competitive golf games, fun and socializing. Bring your clients, colleagues, family and friends. Topgolf provides a unique networking and social opportunity. You'll play in climate-controlled bays in teams of up to six. See Sam Rayburn's article on page 9 for more information about Topgolf.

We'll be joined by members from the Oregon Bankers Association and Oregon Society of CPAs.

Registration includes games, hosted appetizers and a cash bar. \$75 for MBA members and non-lawyers, \$95 after June 1 and for non-MBA members.

Bay sponsorship opportunities are available and include complimentary tickets.

Proceeds from MBA golf events benefit the Volunteer Lawyers Project.

To register or sponsor, see the insert in this issue or contact Pamela Hubbs (503.222.3275, [pamela@mbabar.org](mailto:pamela@mbabar.org)).

to justice. The MBA currently has an affinity partnership with Bank of the Cascades. The full list of leadership banks can be found here: <http://www.oregonlawfoundation.org>

As residents of Oregon, we often like to say that things are different here. As lawyers, we have reason to be proud of the sense of community that exists in our local legal profession. Supporting legal

aid is a fundamental responsibility that all Oregon attorneys must share if we are going to maintain the unique culture we have here in the years to come. Please join with us to help guarantee the promise that all citizens are entitled to equal justice under law.