



**State Bar of Georgia GLSP Funding Task Force**

Open Hearing

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

December 8, 2006

State Bar of Georgia Bar Center

**Meeting Minutes**

**Task Force Public Hearing**

**Introductions and Roll**

Task Force Chair Lamar Sizemore, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Norman Fletcher, Harold T. Daniel Jr., Tommy Burnside, Chris Phelps were in attendance.

In attendance at the open hearing-styled meeting were: Bar Secretary Jeff Bramlett, Phyllis Holmen, GLSP Executive Director; bar members Patrise M. Perkins-Hooker, Karlise Grier, Ken Shigley (by telephone), ALAS Executive Director Steve Gottlieb, Applesed Director Sharon Hill, Rita Sheffey, and Charles T. Lester; and Terence Dicks, Chair of the Georgia Clients Council.

**Hearing Summary**

The hearing testimony may be viewed at this weblink:  
<http://www.georgiaadvocates.org/link.cfm?7481>.

- Patrise Perkins-Hooker recommended that support for GLSP be folded into the Bar budget. She noted she does not support dues assessments or add-ons. Her comments lead to a discussion among Committee members about a Bar dues increase, including comments that Bar dues were among the lowest in the nation; that a current bar dues cap at \$250.00 with bar dues currently set at \$230 allowed for a \$20.00 dues increase. Committee members discussed a need for a consistent and dependable funding source and that a bar dues increase would meet that need.

**HEADQUARTERS**

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Committee members discussed the Bar connection to GLSP and were informed that the Bar appoints 9 of the program's 18 lawyer board members.

- Charlie Lester informed the Committee of his firm's financial support for GLSP. Lester noted that he does not favor negative check-offs. He also said that there would be some argument that funds should be shared with Atlanta Legal Aid (later testimony from ALAS representatives indicated that ALAS supports bar funding for GLSP—see below). Lester also commented that another Bar Board member had expressed an interest in mandatory pro bono, and that mandatory pro bono, with a "pay or play" option, might raise some funding for GLSP. Committee members discussed the pros and cons of mandatory pro bono, and concluded that it was likely to be a source of great debate. Committee members noted that the current development efforts required staff and other expenses that take a significant chunk of the funds raised. The Committee noted a "pay or play" bar pro bono reporting program would require similar, if not more, administration.
- Sharon Hill suggested a mandatory assessment for GLSP along the lines of current mandatory IOLTA participation. Her comments lead to a discussion among the Committee members of the poverty population in Georgia (28% Metro Atlanta/72% outside Atlanta), the lawyer-to-client ratio outside Atlanta, and how those funds might be distributed using a formula similar to IOLTA's method.
- Steve Gottlieb told the Committee that Atlanta Legal Aid is not asking to participate in the State Bar effort for GLSP. He asked that Committee members be sensitive to the fundraising efforts of his program. Gottlieb provided detail about his program's work raising funds from large Atlanta law firms. Hal Daniel added that about 65% of Georgia's lawyers are in metro Atlanta, and that fundraising for ALAS occurs within a limited geographical area. The Committee briefly discussed lawyer incomes around the state. Chris Phelps inquired about current and past state funding for legal services. Phyllis Holmen provided the members with information on state funding. Committee members discussed perceptions of the legal profession held by legislators and briefly discussed concerns about the ability to successfully obtain yearly legislative funding without demonstrating commitment from the legal profession to programs.

This discussion then lead to further comments about practical issues such as Bar Board approval of proposals, the need for promulgation of rules, approval by the Supreme Court, meeting the bar dues publication deadline, and bar budget development deadlines. Committee members noted that the bar dues/assessment approach entailed fewest timeline barriers. Chris

Phelps believed it to be too early to narrow down options, and that he felt the Task Force charge was to think outside the box.

- Terence Dicks, Chair of the Georgia Clients Council (a nonprofit organization comprised of LSC-eligible clients who work on community empowerment and provide client feedback to GLSP) highlighted how the Task Force's work would impact low-income Georgians with legal needs. He provided stories about how legal assistance changes people's lives. He noted that he is hopeful that the task Force will find a way to support GLSP in its work to help solve critical legal problems and help move people from dependency to self-sufficiency.

The Hearing portion of the Task Force meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm. Task Force members then moved into a regular business meeting attended by only Committee members.

### **Task Force Business Meeting**

Lamar Sizemore distributed a GLSP funding chart provided by Phyllis Holmen. The chart sets out the various funding sources for the program.

Mike Monahan will contact bar leaders or bar staff from several states and provide their contact information to the Task Force. The Task Force will be assigned the responsibility of calling their assigned contact to explore how each bar provides support to legal aid programs. Task Force members will then report back at the January 19<sup>th</sup> Task Force meeting in Savannah.

Mike Monahan reported that he has asked the Bar's Meetings Director for space to meet during the Bar's Mid-year Meeting in Savannah at the Hyatt Regency. Mike will send details of the meeting time and locations to Task Force members.

Committee members discussed GLSP's current activities, some of which are seen as "pro-active" rather than typical legal services type work. Hal Daniel and Mike Monahan noted that funding often is tied to specific projects, and that bar funding would allow GLSP to rely less on work directed by a funder.

Chris Phelps inquired about the possibility of a civil filing fee. Mike Monahan responded that filing fees in metro Atlanta are supporting ALAS and other programs, but the filing fees are triggered by county populations. None of GLSP's counties approach the triggering population. Mike Monahan will provide details about the current filing fee funding. Chris also noted that the Bar's finance Committee begins its work in February, so the Task force should keep their activities in mind.

Mike will follow up with Committee minutes, and send materials to Jimmy Franklin and Tina Shadix-Roddenberry. Mike will send the state bar contacts list to Lamar Sizemore.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Monahan", with a horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike Monahan