

AGENDA ITEM

54-111 OCT 13

DATE: September 12, 2012

TO: Members, Board Committee on Operations
Members, Board of Trustees

FROM: Mary L. Flynn, Interim Senior Director, Office of Legal Services
Stephanie Choy, Managing Director, Legal Services Trust Fund Program

SUBJECT: Campaign for Justice Month Standing Resolution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Campaign for Justice is dedicated to increasing resources for legal aid programs across the state. At its September 2011 meeting, the Board of Governors approved the State Bar's partnership in the Campaign for Justice and passed a resolution declaring October 2011 as Campaign for Justice Month.

The Campaign for Justice Committee, staffed by the State Bar, now requests that the Board of Trustees adopt a standing resolution that recognizes the month of October each year as Campaign for Justice Month. The goals of Campaign for Justice Month are to raise funds for legal services, increase pro bono work, and enhance awareness of the financial crisis facing the legal services community. Campaign for Justice Month also honors those who work to make justice equally accessible to all and to help ensure that the resources supporting that work are adequate and sustainable. The form of the resolution is similar to the resolutions adopted by bar associations across the state.

BACKGROUND

With the economic recession, IOLTA funds in California have continued to decrease since 2008, resulting in unavoidable cuts in IOLTA funding for legal services for Californians in need. In September 2010, California legal services organizations, working with the State Bar of California, formed the Campaign for Justice to raise funds for legal services, increase pro bono work, and enhance awareness of the financial crisis facing the legal services community. At its September 2011 meeting, the Board of Governors passed a resolution approving the State Bar's partnership in the Campaign for Justice and recognizing October 2011 as Campaign for Justice Month. The Campaign for Justice then launched a coordinated statewide effort in October 2011 and has seen momentum continue to build over the course of the year as new communities have become more involved in the pursuit to increase access to justice.

In 2011, Campaign for Justice Month allowed the legal community to unite behind a common cause to publicize the necessity for legal aid and bring attention to the dire need for increased funding and pro bono support:

- The Campaign for Justice Committee launched a website -- www.CAforJustice.org – which now serves as a central portal for information and tools for the expanding network of campaign supporters, receiving nearly 1,000 unique visitors a month.
- Representatives of local bar associations, law firms, faith-based communities, corporate industries, and law schools declared their support for the Campaign for Justice, obtained tools, and led efforts to educate their communities about the need for increased resources for legal services.

This year, the Campaign for Justice continues to grow:

- The Justice Gap Fund Committee, a joint committee of the Access to Justice Commission and the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission, will host a reception to kick-off the 2013 Justice Gap Fund Campaign and recognize the large law firms with the highest percentage of attorneys contributing to the Justice Gap Fund during the 2012 fiscal year.
- Local bar associations are passing resolutions in support of the Campaign for Justice and informing their member attorneys about the legal aid funding crisis.
- The Campaign for Justice Committee is meeting with leaders of faith-based organizations to encourage them to educate their community about the need to fill the justice gap.
- The Campaign for Justice Website will feature new client stories and updates on the various events and activities surrounding equal access to justice during October, Campaign for Justice Month.

The Board's support of these efforts with a standing resolution declaring October to be Campaign for Justice Month is critical, and will demonstrate the State Bar's commitment to the fundamental principle of the importance of access to justice for all.

FISCAL / PERSONNEL IMPACT:

None.

RULE AMENDMENTS:

None.

BOARD BOOK IMPACT:

None.

RECOMMENDATION

The Campaign for Justice Committee and its staff recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt a standing resolution recognizing the month of October as Campaign for Justice Month for purposes of honoring those who work to make justice equally accessible to all and to help ensure that the resources supporting that work are adequate and sustainable. The form of the resolution is similar to the resolutions adopted by bar associations across the state and highlights the role of legal services in providing equal access to the civil justice system and the need for increased funding.

PROPOSED BOARD COMMITTEE RESOLUTION:

Should the Board Operations Committee agree with the above recommendation, the following resolution would be appropriate:

RESOLVED, that the Board Operations Committee recommends that the Board adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS current funding sources for legal services have continually fallen short of the amount required to fulfill the need for legal assistance for Californians of limited means, resulting in a “justice gap”; and

WHEREAS legal services organizations efficiently provide access to the justice system and promote fair conflict resolution; and

WHEREAS due to insufficient funding, legal services organizations in California are forced to turn away more than half of qualified applicants seeking legal assistance; and

WHEREAS a network of attorneys and other leaders who care about fairness and seek to ensure that all Californians have access to justice under the law have organized a Campaign for Justice through which legal aid and pro bono lawyers will keep families in their homes, enable children to access health care, secure wrongfully denied unemployment benefits, and help persons with disabilities get Social Security; and

WHEREAS the lead entities in the Campaign for Justice are the Office of Legal Services of the State Bar of California and the Legal Aid Association of California, an organization of more than 75 legal services providers; and

WHEREAS the Campaign for Justice launched a coordinated statewide effort in October 2011 to increase awareness of the need for increased resources to provide legal services for those of limited means under the banner: "Choose Justice, Increasing Access for Those Without";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board Operations Committee recommends to the Board of Trustees that it recognize the month of October as Campaign for Justice Month for purposes of honoring those who work to make justice equally accessible to all and to help ensure that the resources supporting that work are adequate and sustainable.

PROPOSED BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLUTION:

Should the Board concur with the Board Operations Committee's recommendation, the following resolution would be in order:

WHEREAS current funding sources for legal services have continually fallen short of the amount required to fulfill the need for legal assistance for Californians of limited means, resulting in a "justice gap"; and

WHEREAS legal services organizations efficiently provide access to the justice system and promote fair conflict resolution; and

WHEREAS due to insufficient funding, legal services organizations in California are forced to turn away more than half of qualified applicants seeking legal assistance; and

WHEREAS a network of attorneys and other leaders who care about fairness and seek to ensure that all Californians have access to justice under the law have organized a Campaign for Justice through which legal aid and pro bono lawyers will keep families in their homes, enable children to access health care, secure wrongfully denied unemployment benefits, and help persons with disabilities get Social Security; and

WHEREAS the lead entities in the Campaign for Justice are the Office of Legal Services of the State Bar of California and the Legal Aid Association of California, an organization of more than 75 legal services providers; and

WHEREAS the Campaign for Justice launched a coordinated statewide effort in October 2011 to increase awareness of the need for

increased resources to provide legal services for those of limited means under the banner: "Choose Justice, Increasing Access for Those Without";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the State Bar of California, on recommendation of its Board Operations Committee, recognizes the month of October as Campaign for Justice Month for purposes of honoring those who work to make justice equally accessible to all and to help ensure that the resources supporting that work are adequate and sustainable.