



California's Attorney Deserts

California Attorney Deserts

One measure of access to the legal system is access to an attorney. Massive parts of rural California are attorney deserts, where residents must drive many miles to reach an attorney. This brief presents 2016 California attorney data to illustrate where attorney deficits are.

Many parts of California lack sufficient attorneys to serve their population, a situation that is particularly acute in rural areas. In this brief, we study those areas using a California classification scheme that divides the state into sub-county geographical units known as Medical Service Study Areas (MSSAs), each of which is categorized as “rural,” “urban,” or “frontier.”¹ MSSAs are clusters of Census tracts, and they are a scale used by the Office of Statewide Health and Development Planning (OSHPD) to determine “areas of unmet priority need for primary care family physicians.” The MSSA is an appropriate scale for studying the lawyer shortage because one should need to travel no farther to access legal services than one travels to access medical services.

The MSSA scale is also useful for assessing the rural lawyer shortage and the availability of other justice system services because California’s counties tend to be unevenly developed. Population density varies widely within counties. Further, the finer level of detail reflected in MSSAs yields more nuanced information because even highly urbanized counties, e.g., Los Angeles County, are enormous by the standards of other states and feature rural pockets. Other counties are even larger in terms of land area, e.g., Fresno, San Bernardino, and their urban MSSAs are well served by lawyers; these counties’ vast rural and frontier MSSAs, however, which are home to many of the state’s rural poor, are attorney deserts.

¹ The data in this brief was mapped in 2016 by Professor James W. Meeker of UC Irvine, an ex officio member of the CCAJ, and two graduate students. Meeker’s team mapped 2016 attorney address data provided by the State Bar of California. An attorney’s address is a matter of public record, available on the State Bar of California’s website and is presumably an office address rather than a home address. That data set included both active and inactive lawyers.

KEY FINDINGS

- Attorneys are more concentrated in urban areas than is the general population.

	Attorneys	Residents
Urban	96.11% (189.5k)	86.99% (33m)
Rural	3.72% (7,333)	12.35% (4.7m)
Frontier	0.17% (324)	0.66% (252k)

- This is also reflected in the number of residents per attorney (RPA). California’s average RPA is 193.
 - Urban RPA – 175
 - Rural RPA – 626
 - Frontier RPA – 738
- Highest RPA: City and County of San Francisco, 41
- Lowest RPA: Kings County, 1364
- Areas with high RPA tend to be high poverty.

MSSA CATEGORIES

- Urban: 75,000-125,000 residents, reflecting recognized community boundaries that share similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics
- Rural: 50,000 or fewer residents and density of less than 250 residents/square mile
- Frontier: Fewer than 11 residents/square mile
- Only two California counties—San Francisco and Orange—are entirely urban, with no rural or frontier MSSAs.

Given California's size and diversity, the state was divided into seven regions to facilitate analysis. The regions cluster counties based largely on economic and historical affinity, as well as similarities in physical geography. Regional information is presented in the table below, and county-level information is presented on the following three pages.



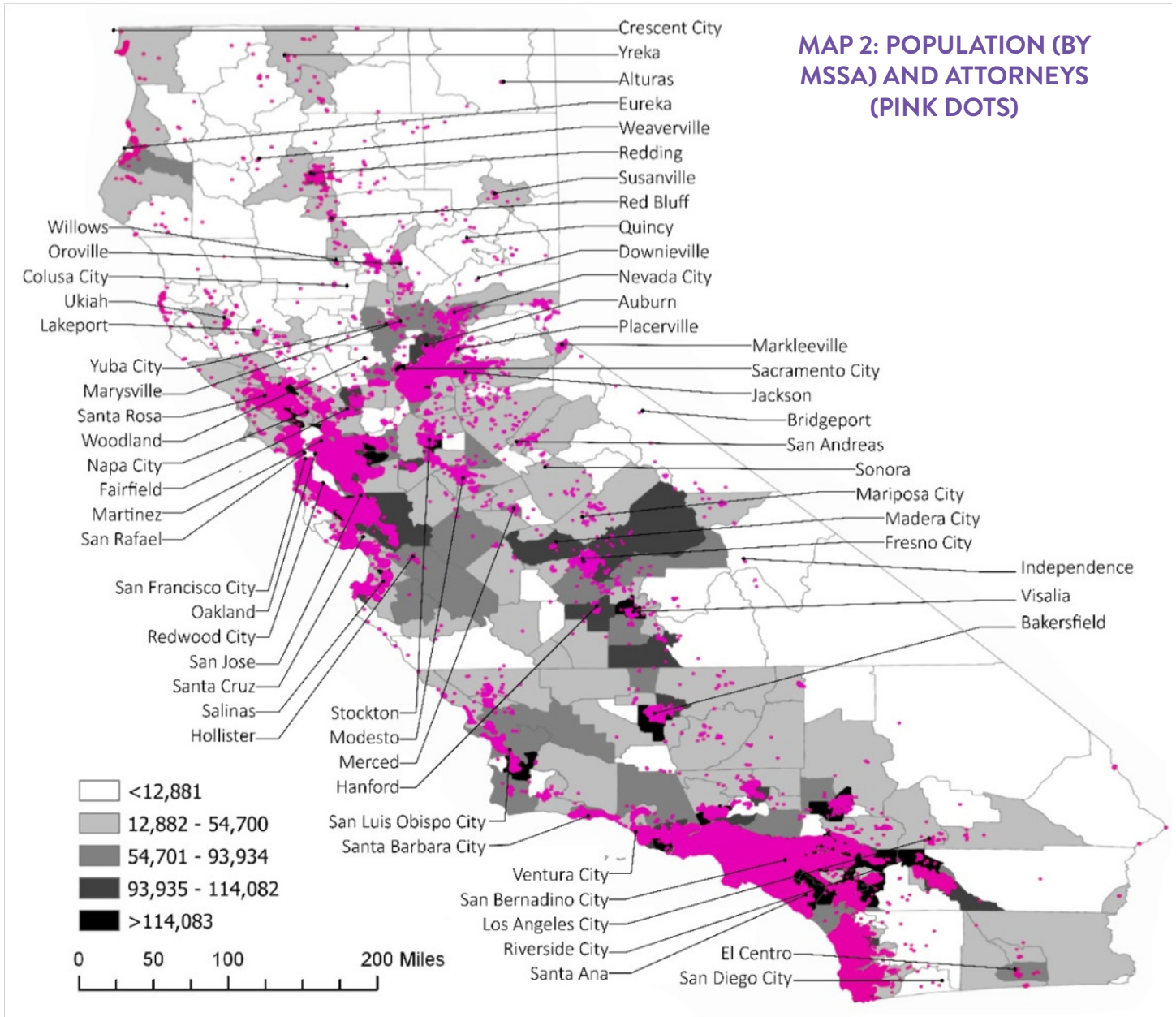
RURAL CALIFORNIA AT A GLANCE

- Fewer than a million Californians (2.1%) live in “rural” areas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, but they outnumber the entire population of South Dakota.
- In 2010, California’s rural and small-town population was 36.4% Latinx, 2.5% Asian, 2.6% African American, 2.2% are bi- or multi-racial, and 1.5% Native American.
- More Native Americans live in California than in any other state, and they often live in the state’s most remote reaches.
- Consistent with national trends, the poor and elderly—both vulnerable populations—are over-represented in rural California.
- California’s rural people and rural interests are often overlooked in the context of a highly urban state.

ATTORNEYS BY REGION

Region Name	Total Attorneys	Total Population	Residents per Attorney	Poverty Rate*	Area (in sq. miles)	Attorneys per sq. mile
Greater Bay Area	59,536	7,397,334	124	10.3%	7,620.50	7.81
Southern California	104,270	17,074,498	164	13.7%	11,497.69	9.07
Central Coast	5,145	1,454,757	283	14.4%	11,380.92	0.45
Gold Country & Sierra	2,881	966,828	336	13.3%	16,504.28	0.17
Central Valley	16,182	5,503,641	340	21.9%	26,707.30	0.61
Central Valley w/o Sac	6,553	4,090,211	624	22.4%	25,917.46	0.25
Far Northern	2,294	1,115,467	486	19.2%	42,882.30	0.05
Inland Empire	6,906	4,540,950	658	17.6%	42,116.72	0.16

The following Map 2 shows MSSAs by population (the most densely populated areas are darkest), with each pink dot representing a single attorney. County seats are labeled.



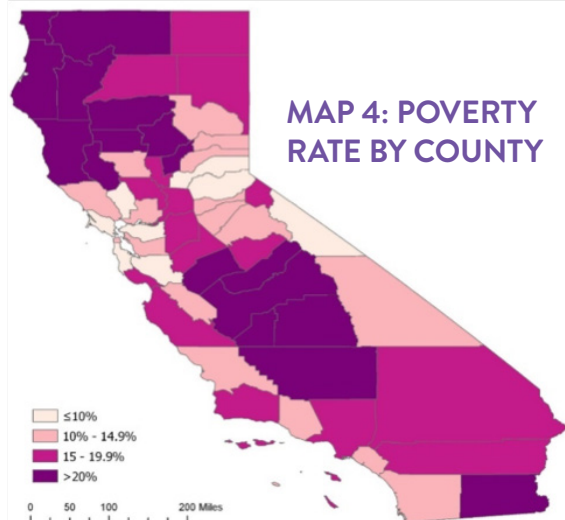
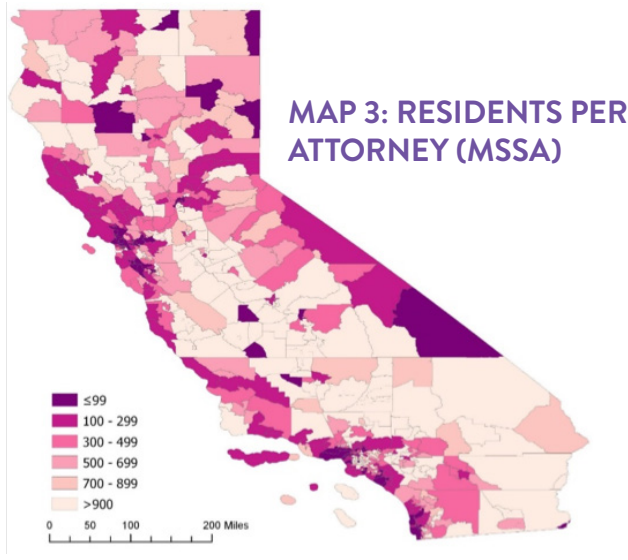
ATTORNEYS BY COUNTY

County Name	Region	Total Attorneys	Total Population	Residents per Attorney	Poverty Rate*	Area (in sq. miles)	Attorneys per sq. mile
Los Angeles	Southern	62,775	9,969,234	159	17.8%	4,546.65	13.8
Orange	Southern	19,406	3,086,331	159	12.5%	811.91	23.9
San Diego	Southern	18,856	3,183,143	169	14.0%	4,271.01	4.4
Ventura	Southern	3,233	835,790	259	10.6%	1,868.12	1.7
Totals and Averages for Region	Southern	104,270	17,074,498	164	13.7%	11,497.69	9.1
Imperial	Inland Empire	167	177,026	1,060	24.1%	4,481.67	0.0
Inyo	Inland Empire	55	18,439	335	10.8%	10,226.88	0.0
Riverside	Inland Empire	3,928	2,266,899	577	16.5%	7,303.05	0.5
San Bernardino	Inland Empire	2,756	2,078,586	754	19.1%	20,105.13	0.1
Totals and Averages for Region	Inland Empire	6,906	4,540,950	658	17.6%	42,116.72	0.2
Alameda	Greater Bay Area	9,357	1,559,308	167	12.0%	767.55	12.2
Contra Costa	Greater Bay Area	5,526	1,118,079	202	10.2%	974.77	5.7
Marin	Greater Bay Area	3,242	256,802	79	8.1%	574.87	5.6
Napa	Greater Bay Area	584	139,253	238	8.8%	788.58	0.7
San Francisco	Greater Bay Area	20,218	829,072	41	12.5%	204.50	98.9
San Mateo	Greater Bay Area	5,896	739,837	125	7.7%	479.22	12.3
Santa Clara	Greater Bay Area	11,785	1,841,569	156	9.3%	1,304.05	9.0
Solano	Greater Bay Area	713	421,624	591	12.7%	906.19	0.8
Sonoma	Greater Bay Area	2,215	491,790	222	11.2%	1,620.78	1.4
Totals and Averages for Region	Greater Bay Area	59,536	7,397,334	124	10.3%	7,620.50	7.8
Alpine	Gold Country & Sierra	3	1,202	401	18.9%	743.19	0.0
Amador	Gold Country & Sierra	100	37,159	372	11.2%	605.95	0.2
Calaveras	Gold Country & Sierra	89	44,921	505	12.7%	1,036.92	0.1
El Dorado	Gold Country & Sierra	533	181,465	340	9.8%	1,734.33	0.3
Madera	Gold Country & Sierra	129	152,452	1,182	22.1%	2,153.28	0.1
Mariposa	Gold Country & Sierra	28	17,946	641	16.3%	1,462.82	0.0
Mono	Gold Country & Sierra	57	14,193	249	8.8%	3,131.87	0.0
Nevada	Gold Country & Sierra	408	98,606	242	12.1%	973.79	0.4
Totals and Averages for Region	Gold Country & Sierra	2,881	966,828	336	13.3%	16,504.28	0.2

County Name	Region	Total Attorneys	Total Population	Residents per Attorney	Poverty Rate*	Area (in sq. miles)	Attorneys per sq. mile
Placer	Gold Country & Sierra	1,432	361,518	252	8.7%	1,425.54	1.0
Sierra	Gold Country & Sierra	5	3,019	604	11.3%	962.16	0.0
Tuolumne	Gold Country & Sierra	97	54,347	560	14.2%	2,274.44	0.0
Totals and Averages for Region	Gold Country & Sierra	2,881	966,828	336	13.3%	16,504.28	0.2
Butte	Far Northern	499	221,578	444	21.3%	1,677.12	0.3
Colusa	Far Northern	25	21,424	857	13.5%	1,156.35	0.0
Del Norte	Far Northern	54	28,066	520	21.7%	1,054.11	0.1
Glenn	Far Northern	26	28,019	1,078	20.3%	1,326.97	0.0
Humboldt	Far Northern	336	134,876	401	21.0%	3,642.26	0.1
Lake	Far Northern	107	64,209	600	24.6%	1,329.42	0.1
Lassen	Far Northern	33	33,356	1,011	16.2%	4,720.10	0.0
Mendocino	Far Northern	276	87,612	317	20.2%	3,542.35	0.1
Modoc	Far Northern	9	9,335	1,037	16.9%	4,203.39	0.0
Plumas	Far Northern	46	19,286	419	12.8%	2,613.43	0.0
Shasta	Far Northern	443	178,520	403	17.5%	3,847.38	0.1
Siskiyou	Far Northern	101	44,261	438	22.0%	6,347.35	0.0
Sutter	Far Northern	133	95,067	715	17.5%	608.49	0.2
Tehama	Far Northern	85	63,284	745	21.5%	2,962.16	0.0
Trinity	Far Northern	32	13,515	422	20.1%	3,207.60	0.0
Yuba	Far Northern	89	73,059	821	20.8%	643.80	0.1
Totals and Averages for Region	Far Northern	2,294	1,115,467	486	19.2%	42,882.30	0.1
Fresno	Central Valley	2,274	948,844	417	26.9%	6,011.05	0.4
Kern	Central Valley	1,035	849,254	821	23.1%	7,733.10	0.1
Kings	Central Valley	111	151,390	1,364	21.6%	1,391.53	0.1
Merced	Central Valley	204	261,609	1,282	24.2%	1,978.50	0.1
Sacramento	Central Valley	9,629	1,413,430	147	17.9%	789.84	12.2
San Joaquin	Central Valley	990	701,050	708	17.8%	1,426.49	0.7
Stanislaus	Central Valley	682	522,794	767	18.2%	1,514.60	0.5
Tulare	Central Valley	455	451,108	991	28.3%	4,838.65	0.1
Yolo	Central Valley	802	204,162	255	19.3%	1,023.53	0.8
Totals and Averages for Region	Central Valley	16,182	5,503,641	340	21.9%	26,707.30	0.6

County Name	Region	Total Attorneys	Total Population	Residents per Attorney	Poverty Rate*	Area (in sq. miles)	Attorneys per sq. mile
Monterey	Central Coast	1,190	424,927	357	16.1%	3,330.41	0.4
San Benito	Central Coast	71	56,888	801	10.8%	1,390.47	0.1
San Louis Obispo	Central Coast	997	274,184	275	14.2%	3,342.78	0.3
Santa Barbara	Central Coast	1,876	431,555	230	15.9%	2,860.11	0.7
Santa Cruz	Central Coast	1,011	267,203	264	15.1%	457.15	2.2
Totals and Averages for Region	Central Coast	5,145	1,454,757	283	14.4%	11,380.92	0.5

* U.S. Census Bureau, Official Poverty Measure, American Fact Finder: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate



Attorney Deserts Align with Poverty

Many attorney deserts are high poverty areas, as shown above. In Map 3, the darker the color, the more attorneys there are in that MSSA, relative to population. In Map 4, the darker the color, the higher the poverty rate. The lack of attorneys in high poverty areas is problematic because legal access enables other poverty-fighting measures to function. For example, one study found that every \$1 invested in legal aid, the programs secured \$5 in federal benefits for eligible clients who otherwise would not receive them and that \$1 invested in legal

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Central Valley

- Heavily agricultural
- Just over 25% residents live in rural or frontier MSSAs
- RPA is heavily skewed by Sacramento, the state capitol
- Kings County: highest RPA in the state

Central Coast

- Percentage rural and frontier residents nearly twice the Central Valley, but overall RPA is better
- Coastal exposure attracts tourism and wealth

Far North

- More than 80% population live in rural and frontier MSSAs
- Some counties' RPAs are higher than 1000

Gold Country/Sierra Nevada

- More than 60% population rural or frontier
- While regional RPA is good, it deteriorates with distance from metro areas
- In Sierra County, for example, only one attorney is available for private representation. The other four attorneys are employed in government or other positions.

Greater Bay Area

- San Francisco - lowest RPA in the state and no rural or frontier MSSAs.

Inland Empire

- Four counties constitute more than a quarter of California's land area, but vast parts of the region are sparsely populated
- San Bernardino County is twice the size of Massachusetts
- Attorneys in these counties are clustered in their urban MSSAs, leaving vast areas with no attorneys

Southern California

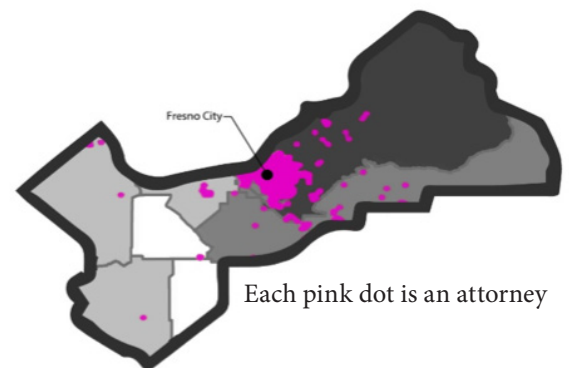
- San Diego, Ventura, and Los Angeles counties all have rural MSSAs, but Orange County is entirely urban.

housing defense saved \$2.69 in homeless services.² Another study found that availability of legal services significantly lowers the rate of intimate partner violence against women.³

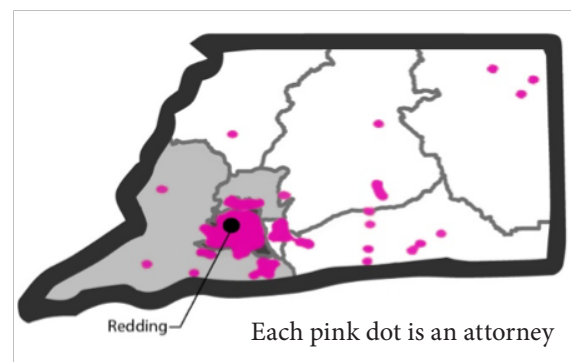
Attorney Distribution within Counties

Some of the disparities in lawyer availability are best revealed not by comparing counties or regions, but by looking at where lawyers are within a particular county. Fresno County makes an interesting case study because it represents a blend of urban, rural, and frontier: Fresno (City), California's fifth largest city, is surrounded by rural areas, with the Sierra Nevada rising to the east and central valley farms stretching south and west from it. The county covers some 6,000 square miles, of which 98% is classified as rural or frontier under the MSSA scheme. While 37% of the population lives in those rural and frontier areas, just 5% of Fresno County attorneys have addresses there. Thus, each lawyer in an urban part of Fresno County serves around 417 people and about 1/20 of a square mile, while each rural lawyer serves around 2,887 people and 48 square miles. The spatial distribution of lawyers in Fresno County—or more precisely their spatial concentration—is depicted in Map 5. The consequences of this urban concentration of Fresno County attorneys is thrown into even sharper relief when you consider that 35% of those living below the poverty line in Fresno County live in rural or frontier MSSAs. Indeed, the sheer number of rural and frontier poor in Fresno County—90,000 residents—is the greatest of any California county, even though Fresno County is a metropolitan county.

MAP 5: FRESNO COUNTY



MAP 6: SHASTA COUNTY



² *Investing in Justice, A Roadmap to Cost-Effective Funding of Civil Legal Aid in Massachusetts*, 2014. www.bostonbar.org/docs/default-document-library/statewide-task-force-to-expand-civil-legal-aid-in-ma---investing-in-justice.pdf, at 4-5.

³ *Supporting Survivors: The Economic Benefits of Providing Civil Legal Assistance to Survivors of Domestic Violence*, 2015, <http://legalaidresearch.org/pub/4562/supporting-survivors-the-economic-benefits-of-providing-civil-legal-assistance-to-survivors-of-domestic-violence/>, at 5.

In Far Northern California, Shasta County is the most populous and only metropolitan county; its county seat, Redding, with a population of about 92,000 residents, is the largest California city north of greater Sacramento. Indeed, Redding is the only part of Shasta County that is not rural or frontier, yet the lion's share of Shasta County's attorneys—87%—have addresses in the Redding MSSA. Only 33 of the county's attorneys have addresses in rural parts of Shasta County, while another 23 have frontier addresses. Shasta County covers nearly 4,000 square miles and many of its residents live far from the critical mass of attorneys situated in the Redding metro area. This is depicted in Map 6. Redding has a respectable 257 residents per attorney (RPA), a sharp contrast to a rate less than one-fifth of that in the remainder of Shasta County.

Other Consequences of Attorney Deserts

Low attorney counts have various consequences for local populations and local governments. When the attorney count drops below a certain level, few if any of the attorneys present in a rural or frontier area are actually working in private practice or accepting clients. Most are judges, prosecutors, or in other government positions. Further, attorney shortages can result in higher levels of pre-trial incarceration because attorneys are unavailable to represent those arrested at initial appearance.⁴ In addition, conflicts of interest become increasingly common. As a consequence, residents must sometimes travel to neighboring counties to access legal counsel, while attorneys must travel from outside a given county to keep the justice system and local government functioning. The time and expense of such travel seriously undermine access to justice, just as it increases the costs of justice systems and other local government functions.

⁴ Jacob Kang-Brown & Ram Subramanian, *Out of Sight: The Growth of Jails in Rural America* (2017), <https://www.vera.org/publications/out-of-sight-growth-of-jails-rural-america>.

The Pipeline Problem: Lack of Interest and Student Debt

Few entering the legal profession in California appear interested in rural practice. According to an internal study done by one California legal aid organization, most attorneys who do begin a job in a rural office transfer to a more urban location due to lack of employment opportunities for their partner, social isolation/the desire to be closer to family, or a lack of racial/cultural diversity. Another barrier is the challenge of paying off student debt while employed at a rural job, which presumptively pays less than metropolitan employment.

High tuition at ABA-AALS Accredited law schools and resultant student debt burden shape most graduates' decisions about how—and where—they use their law degrees. California has five high-caliber public law schools, but the cost of attending these institutions is much greater than comparable schools in other states. The average 2018 cost of attending one of California's five public law schools was \$46,453 in tuition and fees (in state).⁵

That figure is as much as three times the cost of other states' public law schools with comparable rankings and employment rates.⁶ The average annual tuition for all ABA-AALS Accredited law schools in California—including both public and private institutions—is only marginally greater, at \$49,558, for a total of \$148,673 over three years.⁷ In part as a consequence of such high law school tuition, average student debt among those graduating from California's ABA-AALS Accredited

Average Annual Law School Tuition (ABA & AALS Accredited Schools)	\$49,558
Average Annual Public Law School Tuition (ABA & AALS Accredited Schools)	\$48,759
Average Annual Private Law School Tuition (ABA & AALS Accredited Schools)	\$50,345
Average Annual Law School Tuition at Cal-Accredited Law Schools	\$21,903
Average Annual Tuition at Unaccredited Schools: distance learning, fixed facility, and correspondence	\$10,000

5 See also, *What Are the Priciest Public Law Schools?*, U.S. NEWS, <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/public-cost-rankings> [<https://perma.cc/T2MN-87QX>] (averaging the 2018 in-state cost of attendance at University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Davis, University of California, Los Angeles, University of California, Irvine, and University of California, Hastings law schools).

6 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law, for example, charged \$23,889 for in-state tuition and fees in 2018, while the University of Georgia School of Law cost \$19,696, the University of Alabama School of Law cost \$23,720, and the William & Mary Law School cost \$32,964.

7 STATE BAR OF CAL., *Admission and Discipline Systems Training* (Jan. 25, 2018), <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Portals/0/documents/communications/Admissions-and-Discipline-System-Training-Jan2018.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/SXL6-CY7V>] (this data point is at slide 34). The remaining 20 institutions are unaccredited.

institutions in 2016 was nearly \$143,000, some 27% greater than the national average.⁸

Steps to Ameliorate Attorney Deserts

California stakeholders can and should take steps to address the state's rural attorney shortage. The California Legislature, in cooperation with the California State Bar, could offer financial incentives for lawyers to practice in under-served rural communities. Several states are doing this in one form another. This strategy has worked well in South Dakota, where lawyers are paid a stipend of more than \$13,000/year when they make a five-year commitment to practice in a rural community.⁹ The state legislature, the state bar, and county governments share the cost of this program.¹⁰ The initial class of 16 attorneys filled quickly, some with out-of-state law graduates who had no prior link to South Dakota.¹¹ This South Dakota Rural Attorney Recruitment Program is now placing its second group of 16 attorneys, with the prospect of further expansion on the horizon.¹²

Alternatively, funds could support a loan forgiveness program or other form of financial relief for those who commit to practice in a rural area. Maine, for example, considered a bill to provide tax credits to rural attorneys, though the state ultimately did not enact it.¹³ Another option is to finance incubators that equip rural attorneys to meet the needs of modest means and low-income clients. Such incubators have been successful in urban California.¹⁴

8 Spreadsheet of California ABA Accredited Law Schools Debt in 2016, Legal Aid Association of Cal. (Jan. 2018) [hereinafter Legal Aid Spreadsheet] (on file with Harvard Law Library) (based on U.S. News and World Report data).

9 S.D. CODIFIED LAWS § 16-23-5 (West, Westlaw through laws of the 2018 Reg. Sess. effective March 23, 2018, and Supreme Court Rule 17-12). This dollar amount was set “in an amount equal to ninety percent” of USD Law’s in-state tuition as it was in 2013. *Id.* The reimbursement amount is tied directly to the 2013 tuition, not current tuition. *Id.* Accordingly, even though USD Law’s tuition has increased since 2013, the incentive payment has remained the same. See *Tuition and Fees*, UNIV. S.D. SCH. OF L., <http://www.usd.edu/law/tuition-and-fees> [https://perma.cc/TD5T-RGCY].

10 S.D. CODIFIED LAWS § 16-23-11 (West, Westlaw through laws of the 2018 Reg. Sess. effective March 23, 2018, and Supreme Court Rule 17-12).

11 Lisa R. Pruitt, Amanda L. Kool, Lauren Sudeall, Michele Statz, Danielle M. Conway & Hannah Haks-gaard, *Legal Deserts: A Multi-State Perspective On Rural Access To Justice*, 13 HARV. L. & POL’Y REV. 108-09 (2018) (citing Telephone Interview with Suzanne Star, Director of the Division of Policy and Legal Services of the South Dakota Unified Judicial System (Dec. 1, 2017)).

12 *Id.*

13 H.R. 128-1680, 2018 Leg., 2d Reg. Sess. (Me. 2017).

14 For example, the Los Angeles Incubator Consortium (LAIC) is a successful example of an attorney incubator program that has helped local attorneys and law school graduates successfully adjust to serving modest-means clients. The LAIC is a partnership between Southwestern Law School, UCLA School of Law, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, local legal aid organizations and the Los Angeles County Law Library, which trains new attorneys in Los Angeles. See LOS ANGELES INCUBATOR CONSORTIUM, <https://www.laincubatorconsortium.com/> [https://perma.cc/9AZV-XG49].

California stakeholders could also take other types of actions. One possibility is a salary survey to garner information about the financial feasibility of rural practice. Many assume that remuneration from rural practice would be inadequate to permit young lawyers to meet their student loan obligations in addition to living expenses, but a salary survey by the Texas State Bar found that many rural attorneys, depending on the practice area and locale, earned more than their urban and suburban counterparts.¹⁵ Such information could establish the feasibility of rural practice and make it much more attractive to members of the bar. The State Bar could also reconsider lowering the “cut score” on the California Bar Exam. A higher pass rate would likely bolster the number of rural practitioners, while also presumably resulting in a more diverse profession.¹⁶ This prospect is supported by the fact that many graduates of Cal-accredited schools, especially those located in rural areas, tend to stay and practice in those locales.¹⁷

California law schools also have a critically important role to play. Legal educators should treat rural practice as a legitimate and rewarding career option, and they should prepare their students for rural practice. Consider that, in South Dakota, the state’s Chief Justice speaks to entering students each fall, encouraging them to consider rural practice and touting its rewards.¹⁸ While this is not feasible in California given the size and complexity of the state’s legal education market, California law schools do have opportunities legitimate and promote rural practice to their students.

First, law school curricula should go beyond the occasional offering of a course in food and agricultural law to include discussions of rural justice systems and the rural socio-spatial milieu. Law schools should also ensure they are preparing graduates for general practice, often a necessity in rural areas. Legal educators should also pay attention to applicants who hail from rural areas.

15 Lindsay Stafford Mader, *Way Out Yonder*, 78 TEX. BAR J. 524, 526 (2015) (finding that the median salary for rural attorneys in Texas exceeded the median salaries for Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio).

16 CAL. ASSEMBLY COMM. ON JUDICIARY, HEARING BACKGROUND PAPER, DECLINING PASSAGE RATES ON THE CALIFORNIA BAR EXAM: POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS AND IMPACTS, 28 (Feb. 14, 2017), <http://ajud.assembly.ca.gov/sites/ajud.assembly.ca.gov/files/Back%20ground%20Paper%202.14.17.pdf> [https://perma.cc/A35G-AUQL].

17 See E-mail from Mitch Winick, President and Dean, Monterey Coll. of Law, to Lisa R. Pruitt, Professor of Law, Univ. of Cal., Davis (Mar. 20, 2018, 8:28 AM) (on file with The Harvard Law School Library). See also Christopher Chavis, *Location, Location, Location: Rural Law Schools and Their Roles in the Rural Lawyer Shortage*, LEGAL RURALISM BLOG (July 14, 2017, 5:29 PM), <http://legalruralism.blogspot.com/2017/07/location-location-location-rurallaw.html> [https://perma.cc/T325-KPXN].

18 See David Gilbertson, *Reflections on the Rural Practice of Law in South Dakota: Past, Present, and Future*, 59 S. D. L. REV. 433, 441 (2014) (discussing Chief Justice Gilbertson’s efforts to promote rural practice every year during 1L orientation week).

Indeed, law schools should consider recruiting at rural high schools and colleges or a prioritize admission of applicants from rural places, as those who grew up in rural places are more likely to return there.¹⁹ Nebraska has even implemented a program where students from rural areas who attend one of the state's public rural universities are guaranteed admission to the state's flagship law school if they maintain a certain GPA.²⁰

California law schools could facilitate the formation of student groups promoting rural practice.²¹ Maine Law's chapter of the Finch Society, for example, connects law students with rural practitioners, provides a space for students to learn more about rural and small-town practice, and advocates for the interests of rural attorneys before the Maine Legislature.²²

Law schools should also create clinical opportunities and summer or post-graduate fellowships that give students a sense of rural practice. California law students currently can get exposure to rural practice via a range of clinical opportunities, through OneJustice's Justice Bus,²³

¹⁹See *supra* note 16.

²⁰Nebraska boasts the Rural Law Opportunities Program, a pipeline program aimed at recruiting rural students who commit to returning to rural areas to practice law. See E-mail from Anthony Schutz, Assoc. Professor, Univ. of Neb. Coll. of Law, to Lisa R. Pruitt, Professor of Law, Univ. of Cal., Davis (Sept. 4, 2018, 11:22 PDT) (on file with The Harvard Law School Library). The Rural Law Opportunity Program provides undergraduate scholarships to high school students from rural communities; those students are guaranteed admission to the Nebraska College of Law if they meet minimum GPA and LSAT requirements. *Id.* The program also provides participating students with an LSAT prep course, educational programming, and mentorship from law students and rural practitioners. *Id.* See also Karen Sloan, *How to Lure Lawyers to Small Town USA? Start There*, LAW.COM, Nov. 1, 2016, <https://www.law.com/sites/almstaff/2016/11/01/how-to-lure-lawyers-to-small-town-usa-start-there/?sreturn=20171017072523> [<https://perma.cc/H3F6-QDLW>]; Lorelei Laird, *University of Nebraska launches program encouraging more attorneys in state's rural areas*, ABA JOURNAL, Oct. 27, 2016, http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/university_of_nebraska_launches_program_encouraging_more_attorneys_in_rural [<https://perma.cc/V3KV-3ATK>].

²¹University of Arkansas, Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law founded The Finch Society in 2015. Named after Atticus Finch, the small-town lawyer in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "the society's mission is to expand legal representation in modest communities through recruitment, mentorship, and patronage[;] [t]he goal is to provide access to justice across the country at large until legal counsel is within close reach of all who are touched by the law." *Law society at Bowen focuses on expanding rural justice*, UNIV. ARK. WILLIAM H. BOWEN SCH. OF L. (June 10, 2016), <http://ualr.edu/law/2016/06/10/lawsociety-at-bowen-focuses-on-expanding-rural-justice/> [<https://perma.cc/7NKF-3FFZ>].

²²See Student Organizations, UNIV. ME. SCH. OF L., <https://mainelaw.maine.edu/student-life/student-organizations/> [<https://perma.cc/LG9P-M39M>]; Renee Cordes, *Maine Law tackles the need for more young lawyers in state's rural communities*, MAINEBIZ (Nov. 13, 2017), <http://www.mainebiz.biz/article/20171113/CURRENTEDITION/311099996/maine-lawtackles-the-need-for-more-young-lawyers-in-state%27s-rural-communitie> [<https://perma.cc/MDE8-36YW>].

²³*Justice Bus Project*, ONEJUSTICE, <https://onejustice.org/probonojustice/justice-bus-project/> [<https://perma.cc/AWR5-GDDS>].

or through the Practice 99 program, a joint endeavor of UC Berkeley, UC Davis and the San Joaquin College of Law.²⁴

But law schools and other stakeholders have the opportunity to do so much more. Maine Law School, for example, offers a rural practice workshop for attorneys and law students.²⁵ Maine Law, University of Georgia Law School, and several Midwestern law schools operate summer programs that pair law students with rural practitioners; some of these are specifically aimed at facilitating succession planning for aging rural practitioners.²⁶ The University of South Dakota Law School funds up to half the wages of a student's summer work with a rural practitioner.²⁷ These programs have been well received by the legal community; far more Maine rural attorneys signed up to host a student than the number of spots in the program.²⁸ The main reason given for wanting to participate: "We need attorneys here!"²⁹ Law schools would do well to help their graduates capitalize on opportunities associated with rural legal markets, where the need for lawyers is enormous and growing.

In short, the rural attorney shortage won't be alleviated unless a range of stakeholders take rural people and places seriously, along with the opportunities those people and places represent.

²⁴This project was made possible by a grant was made pursuant to a California Bar Foundation Diversity Pipeline Grant Application. Grant Agreement Between the State Bar of Cal. Office of Legal Services, Ctr. on Access to Justice and San Joaquin Coll. of Law (Aug. 21, 2017) (on file with The Harvard Law School Library).

²⁵See *Preparing for Rural Practice*, UNIV. ME. SCH. L., <https://www.mainelawcommunity.org/s/184/16/interior.aspx?sid=184&gid=1&pgid=1049&cid=1924&ecid=1924> [https://perma.cc/M7CN-U4AK].

²⁶See *America's Civil Courts: Whom Do We Serve?*, SELF-REPRESENTED LITIG. NETWORK 6, <https://srln.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/resources/tpl/viewer/print/print.html?appid=7bed22dba4e-c45f281b766181b86215> [https://perma.cc/9QSV-6H4R] (using 5-year estimates from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey from 2014).

²⁷Interview by Hannah Haksgaard with Devra Hermosilla, Dir. of Career Serv. at the Univ. of S. D. Sch. of Law, in Vermillion, South Dakota (Nov. 14, 2017). Although the director of career services at USD Law manages the program, the program is available to first- and second-year students from other law schools who attended high school or college in South Dakota. *Id.*

²⁸See *supra* note 25.

²⁹Internal administrative selection documents on file in the Career Services Office at the University of Maine School of Law.