

Access to Justice – Standing Committee

Jurisdiction

Support the State Bar's access to justice efforts by:

- Developing and recommending proposals for proactive programs to benefit underserved populations, including the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, gender identity, juveniles, domestic violence survivors.
- Supporting resources for civil legal aid programs.
- Providing recommendations and support for the State Bar's pro bono legal services program.
- Recommending John W. Cummiskey Award recipient.
- Identifying the need for any workgroups to support the jurisdiction of the committee.
- Conferring and coordinating regularly with the Access to Justice Policy, Affordable Services, and Online Legal Resource and Referral committees on common strategic goals.
- Identifying possible **collaborations** to support the committee's jurisdiction.

Committee Chair: Ashley Lowe

Staff Liaison: Robert Mathis

Meetings: In-person: 1; Electronic or phone: 4

Committee Activities

1. Pro Bono Honor Roll. With support from the Board of Commissioners, the ATJ Committee established a new mechanism for recognizing and encouraging pro bono service in Michigan. Beginning in 2019, the ALH Pro Bono Honor Roll recognizes individual Michigan attorneys who provide 30 or more hours of pro bono legal services in a calendar year and also law firms and corporations that achieve a per-attorney average of at least 30 hours of pro bono legal services in a calendar year, per the Standard. Individual attorneys, law firms, and corporations are recognized at one of three recognition levels for providing 30, 50, or 100 or more hours of pro bono service in the previous calendar year. The State Bar of Michigan publicizes attorneys on the ALH Pro Bono Honor Roll through several different methods, including, but not limited to, postings on the web, in the Michigan Bar Journal, and/or through other printed and electronic methods.

Goal 2: Strategy 3: Expanding opportunities for SBM members to participate in access to justice initiatives through traditional means including pro bono and by partnering with public service organizations, local and affinity bars

2. Proposed Changes to Michigan Court Rule 2.002. Over the previous bar year, the Consistent Fee Waiver Workgroup drafted a new proposed rule that was adopted by the Representative Assembly at its April 2018. In total, there were four alternative proposals for amendments to MCR 2.002. After extensive conversations and requests for edits on parts of the proposed

rule, the new fee waiver rule was published by the Michigan Supreme Court in December 2018. The final product achieved about 95% of SBM's goals for the new rule. Initial feedback from the legal services community has been positive. There is an on-going discussion with SCAO about additional tweaks to the rule to address issues that may arise in courts across the state.

Goal 3: Strategy 1: Working with our partners to effectively regulate the legal profession in Michigan

3. Pro Bono Workshop The 11th Annual Spring Pro Bono Workshop is slated for May 21, 2019 at the State Bar building. Since January, a workgroup has been hard at work planning sessions designed to encourage interactive discussions amongst attendees, with increased opportunities for attendees to network to discuss strategies for increasing pro bono legal services in Michigan.

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4. ABA Day 2019 The State Bar of Michigan and the Michigan State Bar Foundation worked together to plan the annual ABA Day event in Washington, D.C. The Michigan delegation will talk with members of Congress about the tremendous need and benefits of increased funding for LSC and civil legal services for the poor.

Goal 3: Strategy 5: Pursuing permissible and achievable public policy goals, while minimizing divisiveness and encouraging member input and diverse points of view on public policy issues

5. John W. Cummiskey Award The 2018 John W. Cummiskey Award was presented to attorney Charles David Jones, a retired Administrative Law Judge and a long-time pro bono attorney at Elder Law of Michigan. David was given the award at the SBM Annual Awards Dinner at the SBM Next Conference. The award included a \$3,000 stipend payable to Elder Law of Michigan, per his request. The ATJ Committee has already reviewed the nominations for the 2019 Cummiskey Award and has recommended a recipient to the Board of Commissioners for its approval.

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Future Committee Activities

The ATJ Committee is taking a closer look at a few new and emerging ideas to increase access to justice in Michigan, including an online pro bono case portal to help pro bono attorney find pro bono cases/clients and a Limited Scope Representation Pro Bono Clinic.

Additional Comments

The Michigan State Bar Foundation reported that some members are unaware of the distinction between the ATJ Campaign, ATJ Fund, and the ATJ Committee due to name similarity. To minimize

the confusion going forward, the MSBF asked the ATJ Committee to consider a name change. The ATJ Committee discussed the name change request at its March 27, 2019, meeting. There was committee consensus to recommend that the committee name be changed to the “Justice Initiatives Committee.” The ATJ Committee is aware that this is a recommendation and that the BOC has final approval.

Special Committee Characteristics

This committee may have more than 15 members and may include non-State Bar members.