

**LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION
KATRINA CONFERENCE CALL NOTES
FEBRUARY 14, 2006**

LSC

Helaine Barnett

- Just returned from the ABA Mid-Year meeting in Chicago.
- There was a report presented by the ABA on Katrina relief.
- Melissa Pershing's presentation was fabulous.
- Joy Phillips, the President of the Mississippi Bar, Frank Bernard, the President of the Louisiana Bar, as well as the Presidents of the Texas and Florida Bars also spoke about Katrina relief at the meeting.
- A resolution for funding was adopted by the House of Delegates.
- The ABA has definitely stepped-up to the plate with donations, pro bono assistance, and requests for additional funding.

Taylor Healy

- The Student Hurricane Network (www.studenthurricanetwork.org) is going to be sending 61 law-student volunteers to LSC funded programs over the 5-week Spring break season.
- The Network is also working to place local law students living in the Gulf Region into longer term internship opportunities. If anyone in this group is interested in posting an internship opportunity please contact Anna Arceneaux at arceneauxa@gmail.com.

John Idleman

- LSC completed a survey of its Hurricane affected programs. These statistics are attached to this email.

ABA

Tony Barash

- The Mississippi Pro Bono Coordinator, a position that will be funded by the ABA Business Section, will be working with the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project.
- One resolution adopted at the Mid-Year Meeting, which was sponsored by many sections and divisions, deals with infrastructure and civil and criminal justice systems, in order to deal with a lobbying framework. A copy is attached.

Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights

Barbara Arnwine

- Is there currently any talk about a portion of the HUD CBG waiver money being used for low income persons?
- How is the \$5.7 billion going to be used by Mississippi?
- The Mississippi governor has not guaranteed that 50% of these funds will be used for low income families.

- Legislation allotting the \$5.7 billion does include waivers for money going to “good causes.”
 - The Lawyer’s Committee has been spending time working with the legislature to try and persuade them to follow the “normal” procedure when it comes to allocating to poor people.
 - Tony mentioned that the resolution dealing with lobbying framework may be a hook for the type of program mentioned by Barbara.
- In addition to statements on LSC funding, the Lawyer’s Committee has made it known that this other allocation is important.
- The McWaters lawsuit was brought on by several issues, the main one being the shared household rule. Another issue was the penalties that many people experienced because they had “misspent” their first three months worth of FEMA money according to FEMA workers.
 - In November the class action was extended to include hotel evictions anywhere in the country.
 - FEMA was then required to extend the deadline to February 13, 2006 for families with an authorization code. This was extended to March 1 for many people in New Orleans.
 - Anyone who has applied for an authorization code and has yet to receive a decision from FEMA is allowed to stay in their hotel rooms after the February 13th deadline.
 - There are a number of people who did not receive authorization codes, but who are living in trailers with no electricity or water because they fear that the trailers will be taken if FEMA discovers them.
 - The judge was not inclined to order a TRO
- They are currently working with other groups in Mississippi to set up a referral system for the FEMA appeals system because they have found a law firm that is willing to take these cases. This firm has around 1,100 attorneys. The Lawyer’s Committee is also looking into the possibility of recruiting volunteers at Stanford Law School to develop outreach materials.
- There will be a training held on February 25, 2006 on the work done by four different groups that work with survivors on voting rights, absentee ballots, etc. This training will be live streamed. She will send out this information to the group.
- In Mississippi, they are channeling appeals through technology by tracking case numbers from the hotlines.
- One major problem is that a lot of appeals cases are disappearing
- Ideally, setting up some kind of high level negotiation process with FEMA in order to set real deadlines would be very beneficial.

John Hooks

- A copy of the HUD CBG waiver was sent out to this group on February 14, 2006 at 5:57pm. If you need another copy please ask Taylor to send it again.
- They are currently trying to work with groups in Mississippi to try and target lower income needs.

- The Louisiana governor has already said that a good portion of their CBG waiver will be spent on lower income people.
- Sending a message to anyone on the housing committee who might be willing to take the lead on this issue would be one way for this group to help.

Louisiana

Mark Moreau

- A federal judge in New Orleans refused to give a TRO.
- 88% of people in hotels are going to be evicted
- Many of these people are going to shelters because they do not have any other options.
- Their office is expecting a rise in hotel evictions as the days after the deadline go by.
- Some housing units are now open.
- Cruise ships that are currently housing evacuees will be closing around March 1, 2006.
- Some people are having success in saying that they will rebuild.
- Has spoken with some lawyers in the Northeast who will hopefully be coming down to volunteer their services in New Orleans.
- FEMA is trying to shift gears and hire more local people to work for the organization.

Rowena Jones

- Many evacuees are going to a shelter that has recently re-opened in Shreveport, LA.
- Their office is currently getting a repeat wave of hotel evacuees moving into shelters.
- There has been a steady flow of calls into the office.
- The LawHelp site will soon have appeals information posted.

Mississippi

Sam Buchanan

- Many people were given housing assistance money, but cannot find a place to live.
- Their office has also been seeing hotel evictions.
- They took over the YLD hotline on February 1, 2006.
- Currently working with Equal Justice Works in order to utilize the volunteer attorneys who will be handling FEMA appeals.

Florida

Jose Fons

- They are currently working with issues related to Hurricane Wilma. These issues mainly deal with insurance claims, but they expect to be addressing contractor issues as well.

- They have set up a disaster response group with Florida Legal Services in order to identify common issues.
- There have been issues with the Delray Public Housing units. Some repair work had not been completed and after another smaller storm recently came through the area, many displaced families have to move yet again.

Texas

Paul Furrh

- Everything that was reported in other offices has also been happening in their offices.
- They opened 150 hurricane related cases in January 2006.

NLADA

Don Saunders

- They are beginning to seriously look into mining resources to identify different resources for the unrestrained advocacy that needs to take place.
- Working on trying to see how to exploit the positive feelings people currently have about a coordinated response.
- Many people think that the Mississippi Justice Center Volunteer Coordinator position also needs to happen in Louisiana.

Asian American Justice Center

Juliet Choi

- Recently met with 40 Asian American Community leaders in New Orleans.
- One of the major problems is that LEP evacuees have not understood the large amount of FEMA benefits that are available to them.
- Expects that many more people will be applying for FEMA help in the next few weeks.
- The lack of translators and translated forms are huge issues for the LEP community.
- If evacuees do make an appointment with a FEMA representative, many are unaware that they must wait for that person to come to their homes.
- There are currently 3,000-4,000 Korean Americans in New Orleans, many with a high level of LEP.
- They are currently working to get a volunteer to do a bi-lingual training on site in the Gulf. Any interested LSC programs are welcome to contact Juliet.
- They are currently working with a pro bono law firm that is handling FEMA appeals cases, etc.
- They have requested an extension of the March 11, 2006 deadline for LEP evacuees. Although this is a long shot, they wanted to make a point.

**THE NEXT CALL WILL TAKE PLACE ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2006
AT 5PM EST. CALL IN INFORMATION TO FOLLOW.**