

**Access to Justice Commission Standing Committee on Policy and Resources**

**March 26, 2014, 1:00 P.M.**

**Via Teleconference**

**In Attendance:** Sarah Garcia, Alison Paul, Michele Robinson, Michelle Potts, Janice Doggett, Andy Huff, Jon Bennion, Justice Baker, Abby St. Lawrence, Randy Bishop, Senator Ripley, Amy Sings In The Timber, and Kate Kuykendall.

**Call to Order: 1:00 PM**

The committee discussed its strategic priorities; all were deemed appropriate for the committee. Jon Bennion emphasized the need to prioritize.

Justice Baker described the need to prioritize permanent funding for the Court Help Program, and described the program and its funding history.

The committee discussed the wisdom of focusing only on funding for the Court Help Program versus seeking funding for more than one purpose. Several members suggested focusing only on one item, while others spoke out against taking other options off the table.

Justice Baker suggested there are other things on the committee's "to-do" list that should be explored before we are ready to take a bigger proposal to the legislature. Some might be easy. The committee should look into *pro hac vice* and *cy pres* as potential funding sources. Justice Baker suggested avoiding a situation that could make the Court Help Program into a bargaining chip for other Access to Justice funding initiatives.

**Amy Sings In The Timber** noted that the Montana Justice Foundation has been following the issues of *cy pres* and *pro hac vice* closely for several years, and **agreed to provide a report on both at the next meeting.**

The committee discussed the progress of the Law & Justice interim committee's study of issues in family court, and the suggestions that are currently under consideration. It was noted that there may be requests for specific funding to meet civil legal needs that may not come as part of the Court budget.

The committee generally agreed that it is this committee's top priority to look at permanent funding for court help, and at same time make it a priority to explore other options for another more general appropriation in the next session, given that a strong push for general civil legal aid funding is unlikely during the upcoming session.

Senator Ripley highlighted the need to work closely with the interim committee while options are still being considered. The next interim committee meeting is April 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Economic Impact Report**

Alison presented Montana Legal Services Association's plan to pursue an economic impact report of legal aid in Montana. This will focus on the impact civil legal aid has on people rather than on what sort

of federal dollars are brought into Montana. MLSA feels the report will carry more weight if it is sponsored by the Commission. Alison asked whether the Committee would agree that a study of this kind would be beneficial, and consider a request to the Commission to sponsor the study. Sponsorship would not imply fiscal sponsorship. The committee generally agreed.

### **Next Tasks**

The committee agreed to select a few areas to focus on between now and the next Commission meeting. **Amy moved to include investigation of *cy pres* and *pro hac vice*, funding for the Court Help Program, and coordination with other groups to learn about percolating issues the committee might support as current priorities. Jon seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

Amy volunteered the Montana Justice Foundation to provide information on *cy pres* and *pro hac vice*.

Justice Baker asked Kate Kuykendall to send an email to all Commissioners asking if they know of any related legislative or funding issues.

Sarah Garcia agreed to pull together information regarding the court budget and current interim committee proposal, and to bring information from the Self Represented Litigants committee.

The committee discussed the court's budgeting procedure.

Janice Doggett agreed to send information on recent changes to the bar's *pro hac vice* charging procedures.

Amy mentioned that the Montana Justice Foundation will be happy to provide regular information and updates on funding for Access to Justice and provider coordination in Montana. This will likely amount to a quarterly update.

**The committee appointed Amy Sings In The Timber to serve as chair. Amy accepted.**

**The committee set its next meeting for Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm.**

There was no other business.