



ARKANSAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE
REPRESENTING HOPE

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Arkansas Access to Justice Commission Meeting
September 16, 2022 via Zoom

Commission Members: Mark Mayfield – Chair, Rachael Borné, Kendall Lewellen, Skye Martin, Cliff McKinney, Kerri Michael, Prof. Tiffany Murphy, Lee Richardson, Dr. Chadwick Rodgers, Prof. Tim Tarvin, Jean Carter, & Judge Adam Weeks

Unavailable: Judge Kim Bridgforth – Vice Chair, Judge Carlton Jones – Secretary, Sharnae Diggs, Prof. Kelly Browe Olson, Rep. Andrew Collins, Dequeshia Prude-Wheeler, Sen. James Sturch, & Justice Robin F. Wynne

Guests: Caroline Boch-Law Clerk to Justice Wynne

Staff: Jordan Bates-Rogers, Abby Brenneman, Tameka Parker, Autumn Ballard, & Ginny Greer

Welcome and Introductions – Mr. Mayfield

- Mr. Mayfield called the meeting to order and asked for a full round of introductions. He also thanked Ms. Michael, whose term is ending, for her service to the Commission.

Business Items

- A quorum was present for the meeting.
- **Approval of March 2022 Minutes** – Mr. Mayfield asked for a motion to approve the March 2022 minutes. Ms. Lewellen made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Ms. Murphy seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.
- Mr. Mayfield encouraged attendance to in-person meetings, specifically the Joint Board Retreat.
- **Changes to Operating Rules** – Mr. Bates-Rogers requested to move officer elections to summer align with the Foundation’s officer election cycle and adjust language regarding staffing structure to reflect a full-time IOLTA position. These changes will be voted on at the next Commission meeting.
- **20th Anniversary of Commission** – Mr. Mayfield opened a discussion to brainstorm celebration ideas. After light discussion of the Commission’s specific date anniversary, Mr. Bates-Rogers asked for preferences regarding December-December anniversary recognition or a typical calendar year. Mr. Bates-Rogers suggested a regular calendar year



would be simplest regarding budget. Ms. Murphy agreed and inquired about specific types of events that would be held. Mr. Bates-Rogers brought up a symposium idea to combine event types, including a social event. Mr. Mayfield agreed and suggested creating a video showing the impact of the Commission to be played at events. Ms. Murphy agreed and offered to assist with venue coordination in Northwest Arkansas. Mr. Bates-Rogers inquired about a smaller Northeast Arkansas event. Judge Weeks and Mr. Mayfield agreed that a smaller event using recycled content from prior events would be beneficial. Mr. Lee suggested piggybacking the 2023 Judicial Conference in Northeast Arkansas for more attendees. Mr. Mayfield brought up the idea of an anniversary planning committee to circle back to.

Fendler Fellow Report – Ms. Greer

- Ms. Greer analyzed data from the Free Legal Answers website to determine what growth could be had and what gaps could be filled in FLA outreach. Ms. Greer presented statistic and demographic data, showing overall growth of the program but highlighting gaps in adults over 60 years of age and racial diversity in adults over 70 years of age as well as a large need for immigration information. Ms. Greer also spoke about reaching out to agencies serving seniors and traveling to rural Arkansas areas to support and inform about the Free Legal Answers program. Mr. Mayfield asked if there was a way to communicate to aging adults in hospital or healthcare settings, where the need for legal advice might arise. Ms. Borné offered to connect with the AARP state director and noted it may be worth examining how accessible the FLA website is to aging adults.

Executive Director's Report – Mr. Bates-Rogers

- **Court Staff Guidance** – Mr. Bates-Rogers spoke about putting together guidance for court clerks to discuss the difference between giving legal assistance versus legal advice. Judge Weeks suggested composing scripts to empower staff with what they are able to say instead of what they are not.
- **Statewide Pro Bono Portal Update** – Mr. Bates-Rogers reported the Pro Bono Portal website was being finalized by the vendor and would be available for soft launch in the next week before a formal launch in October.
- **Staffing Reclassification** – Mr. Bates-Rogers reported that the AR Supreme Court unanimously voted to reclassify all staff positions two salary grades higher. Implementation will require approval by the General Assembly.
- **Language Access Initiative Update** – Mr. Bates-Rogers reported meetings with Judge Leon Johnson and Judge Cristi Beaumont to find pilot courts for the Language Access



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Initiative. Due to Arkansas' low scoring metrics on language access, the Foundation will be working on translating key documents such as the Order of Protection Petition, Summons Form, and standard visitation orders from local courts. Work will also be done to ensure individuals are notified in the language they speak that they have the right to an interpreter and language services at every court interaction point. Judge Weeks highlighted the large Marshallese population in his area and offered to allow the Language Access Initiative to pilot in a rural area.

Project Reports – Ms. Brenneman

- **Power Act CLE** – Ms. Brenneman spoke about the Power Act CLE on August 19, 2022 in Fayetteville and reported over 200 attendees in-person and via Zoom; she also reported considering programming changes for upcoming Power Act CLEs.
- **Free Legal Answers** – Ms. Brenneman reported attorney recruitment and retention as well as promotion and gathering questions as the biggest issues. Ms. Brenneman reported a need for more clinics to garner more attorney involvement and announced plans for a clinic/social event on November 10 at the Arkansas Bar Center.
- **Upcoming CLEs** – Heirs Property, UAPB, October 21, 1:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m.; Immigration 101: What All Attorneys Need to Know, Zoom, November 18, 12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m.
- **Access to Justice Month Kickoff** – Mr. Mayfield plugged the Kickoff event and urged Commissioners to attend and sponsor. Ms. Brenneman gave event details such as live music and food and other specifics.

Partner Organization Updates – Ms. Carter and Mr. Richardson

- **Center for Arkansas Legal Services** – Ms. Carter reported the Executive Director transition as the biggest task at CALS and gave some personal background of the incoming Executive Director, Milo Mumgaard. Ms. Carter also reported over 4,700 cases closed through the first 8 months of 2022 and about 30,000 calls taken from the help line, as well as the continuance of popular clinics and outreach. Ms. Carter thanked the Commission for its support and funding over the years.
- **Legal Aid of Arkansas** – Mr. Richardson visited Washington, D.C. with Milo Mumgaard and reported meeting with Arkansas representatives. Mr. Richardson spoke about the in-person Legal Aid Conference in October. He reported an uptick in web presence after transitioning to a new platform, and highlighted divorce, custody, landlord/tenant, self help forms, and wills/estates as the most common Legal Aid issues. Legal Aid is waiting to hear about a \$185,000 grant from the Legal Services Corporation to make another software platform switch.



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- Mr. Mayfield thanks Ms. Carter for her service to CALS and the Commission.

Unlawful Detainer Form Exercise – Ms. Brenneman

- Ms. Brenneman led a discussion and breakout sessions regarding the Unlawful Detainer Form draft to gather impressions, opinions, and questions. After breakouts, Mr. McKinney inquired about “admit none”/general denial issues on the form. Judge Weeks mentioned he could get his population area to test the form and Ms. Borné was willing to offer the form to clients that had recently faced eviction. Judge Weeks suggested a video tutorial, especially for Arkansans with limited literacy.

Next Meeting Date – February 17, 2023, 12:00 PM via Zoom

Meeting Adjournment – Mr. Mayfield asked for a motion to adjourn. Judge Weeks motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lewellen seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.