

LSC Board Honors Volunteer Lawyers at Richmond Meeting

The support of the private bar for civil legal assistance and the willingness of volunteer lawyers to take on legal aid cases cannot be overstated at a time when LSC-funded programs are stretched thin and the nation's poverty population is growing, LSC Board Chairman John G. Levi said in his welcoming remarks at a Richmond, Va., reception on April 14.

The reception in honor of the LSC Board was held in conjunction with the Board's quarterly meeting on April 15 and 16 in Richmond. The reception honored eight law firms and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bar Association for their pro bono service and private attorney involvement in the six LSC programs in Virginia.

The recognition of pro bono and legal aid partnerships in Virginia came a week after the Board launched a Pro Bono Task Force to develop additional resources to help low-income individuals and families facing foreclosure, domestic violence and other serious civil legal problems.

"From my perspective, what has come together somewhat haphazardly over the years in the area of civil legal assistance now likely represents one of the very best public-private partnerships in our nation," Mr. Levi said at the Richmond reception. "It is vital that we keep it strong and growing in order to serve the low-income Americans who come to legal aid offices every day across the country seeking help for their most basic legal problems."



Irving M. Blank, president of the Virginia State Bar, was the keynote speaker at the LSC Board of Directors' reception in Richmond, Va., on April 14. LSC Board Member Robert J. Grey Jr., a partner in the Richmond office of Hunton & Williams, is in the background. Photos by Joe Mahoney.



Left to right: LSC Chairman John G. Levi, George H. Hettrick and Scottie Brown of Hunton & Williams, LSC President James J. Sandman and LSC Board Member Robert J. Grey Jr.

The pro bono honorees at the reception were Hunton & Williams, represented by George H. Hettrick and Scottie Brown; LeClairRyan, represented by Lori D. Thompson; McGuireWoods, represented by Thomas E. Cabaniss; Sands Anderson, represented by L. Lee Byrd; Spotts Fain, represented by Brian R. Marron; ThompsonMcMullan, represented by Neil S. Talegaonkar; Troutman Sanders, represented by Neil S. Kessler, and Williams Mullen, represented by Catherine M. Marriott.

The law firms have formed a consortium, Firms in Service, and meet regularly to share information about their respective pro bono and community service programs in the Richmond metropolitan area. The group has assisted legal aid programs by sponsoring fundraisers, recruiting pro bono attorneys, sponsoring clinics for low-income populations, and other collaborative efforts.



Left to right: LSC Board Chairman John G. Levi, Dana J. Cornett of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bar Association, Blue Ridge Legal Services Executive Director John E. Whitfield, LSC President James J. Sandman and LSC Board Member Robert J. Grey Jr.

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bar Association Pro Bono Program began in 1982 and is regarded as one of the most successful pro bono undertakings in the mid-Atlantic region. Last year, the bar closed 145 pro bono cases, and over the last 18 months, 85 percent of the bar's firms and solo practitioners were involved in pro bono representation. Dana J. Cornett of Harrisonburg, Va., accepted the LSC award on behalf of the bar association, where she is a pro bono team leader and a former president. Ms. Cornett also serves as president of the Board of Directors for Blue Ridge Legal Services.

LSC Board member Robert J. Grey Jr., of Richmond, introduced the pro bono honorees and introduced the keynote speaker, Irving M. Blank, president of the Virginia State Bar. The State Bar was created in 1938 by the state legislature as an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Virginia.