

Access to Justice Task Force  
Minutes  
December 2, 2008

The Access to Justice Task Force met by conference call on December 2, 2008. In attendance were Justice Jim Burke, Justice Marilyn Kite, Rick Lavery, Dona Playton, Dan Fleck, Leigh Anne Manlove, Bob Echols, Jon Asher, and Ronda Munger.

**Focus for the Task Force**

Justice Burke began the meeting by focusing the Task Force's attention on two things: drafting an Order to establish an Access to Justice Commission; and second, to hear comment from Bob Echols and Jon Asher regarding the status of legal services in Colorado. Walter Eggers had previously circulated a draft Order for discussion. The group agreed upon some minor changes to the draft Order and requested Ronda Munger make the changes and circulate a new draft order to the group.

**Colorado Legal Services**

John Asher, a prominent attorney from Colorado, discussed the similarities and differences in the services provided to low income citizens in Wyoming and Colorado. Colorado has very large rural areas and 15 offices to provide legal services. Over the past few years, Mr. Asher had offered assistance to WLS, but the offer was not accepted. Mr. Asher has over 38 years experience in working in legal services.

The immediate issues facing Wyoming will be intake eligibility screening (the Fort Collins office is a well run office and could serve as a good model for Cheyenne and Casper), and the service of Ray Machia as interim director will get us through until the new provider can be named. Mr. Machia will be in the Denver office December 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> where he will review fiscal accounting and charts, etc. to help him get up to speed on his fiscal responsibilities.

Mr. Asher cautioned that he can't run a Wyoming office effectively from Denver but he assured the Task Force that they were not alone and not without considerable help and support from other states, including Colorado. Mr. Asher also discussed the balancing act between the role of the Task Force and the federally funded provider. It will need to be decided if the Commission's province and responsibility is to set the overall statewide values of the program, and he recommends the Commission adopt those values so that whatever provider emerges or is developed is consistent with the shared values of the bar, the courts, the local bar associations, the pro bono community, the IOLTA program in Wyoming, and the law school. This way all the players adopt and embrace the values set by the Task Force to bring in high quality representation to the indigent people in the state.

Colorado wanted a statewide system that was client-centered, that provided equal justice throughout the system, accountable, expansive, diligent, competent, leadership and

manifested stewardship over resources. Mr. Asher will send us a copy of the Colorado values. See also the LSC website for similar sets of values from other states.

The former WLS program focused on the Southeast Wyoming corner of the state. Mr. Asher stated we will need creativity and ingenuity to cover Wyoming. One possibility is to consider a statewide telephone advice and intake system -- a statewide 1-800 number is one possibility. Geo-mapping could also be used to see where poor people really are located. He suggested looking at a low cost, contract system and mobilization of the private bar to provide more equal access to poor people. Montana is a sophisticated technological legal services provider and could give Wyoming some really good information for the Reservation, as well. Funding will also be a tough issue. Colorado raised 1 million dollars in private fundraising campaign. Law firms were asked to contribute \$350 per lawyer, per year. They had around 80 firms give money. Some less than the recommended \$350 per lawyers but each contribution helps. Over a number of years it is possible to create a culture supportive of equal access to justice. Justice Burke thanked Jon Asher and Bob Echols for attending the meeting.

### **Future Meetings**

The next Task Force meeting is set for December 16th.