

Justice Action Group
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March 14, 2006

Dear JAG Statewide Planning Retreat Attendee,

On behalf of the JAG Board of Directors I would like to say that we are pleased that you plan to attend the JAG Planning Retreat scheduled for March 21 at Maple Hill Farm in Hallowell. We appreciate the time that you will be taking away from work and other commitments and hope that you will find this to be a worthwhile meeting.

Enclosed in this mailing you will find:

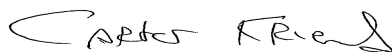
- Directions to Maple Hill Farm,
- The agenda for the day,
- A document entitled *Vision of a Civil Justice System in Maine*, and
- A document entitled *JAG Statewide Planning Retreat Issues List*.

Please review these materials before the Retreat. They will form the basis of much of our discussion.

In addition, enclosed is a packet of Supplemental Materials. This packet contains a range of background information. We are making these materials available to you should you wish to review more in-depth information to help you prepare for the Retreat. We encourage you to read them if you have the opportunity to do so.

Once again, thank you for your interest. I look forward to seeing you at the Retreat.

Sincerely,



Carter Friend
Chair, Retreat Planning Committee

DIRECTIONS TO MAPLE HILL FARM BED & BREAKFAST INN

(a detailed map can be found at www.MapleBB.com/map.jpg):

From the South: Take I-95 North. You will then need to take an exit just south of Portland onto I-295 north at Exit 44, or north of Portland at Exit 52 onto the Falmouth Spur over to I-295 north. Continue taking I-295 north which reconnects with I-95 north just south of Augusta, and continue on I-95 north. Take Exit 109, the first Augusta Exit, off I-95.

From the North: Take Exit 109A, the last Augusta Exit, off I-95. (Don't take Exit 109B, since this just misses the next turn!)

Then, from either direction: Stay in the left lane on the exit ramp for Route 202 West (toward Winthrop), then as soon as you get onto Route 202 West, scoot right over into the left turn lane and take a left turn onto Whitten Road (at the first traffic light only a few hundred feet from the end of the exit ramp). Then just watch carefully for our blue and white signs directing you through a series of turns during the next 4 miles to Maple Hill Farm Bed and Breakfast on the Inn Road (our driveway) off the Outlet Road in Hallowell.

Alternate Directions:

From Downtown Augusta rotary, take Route 201 South about 1 1/2 miles (or From Downtown Gardiner, take Route 201 North about 4 miles), then turn away from the river onto Central Street in Downtown Hallowell at the Clock (right turn from Augusta, left turn from Gardiner) and proceed about 3 miles, following the blue and white signs to Maple Hill Farm Bed and Breakfast on the Inn Road (our driveway) off the Outlet Road in Hallowell.

JAG Planning Retreat
Maple Hill Farm, Hallowell
March 21, 2006
Agenda

- 8:45-9:30 Welcome: Judge Lipez
- Introductions and review of goals for the retreat
 The retreat is designed to get broad agreement on the vision for the civil justice system in Maine and to generate ideas about goals and strategies that will help guide the long-term planning process to achieve that vision.
- 9:30-10:30 Values and Vision Plenary Session
 This session is designed to generate broad discussion of the values that should be reflected in the state's civil justice system based on those that have been identified in previous planning efforts in Maine and additional ones suggested in the discussion. (Please see Vision of a Civil Justice System in Maine, enclosed)
- Break
- 10:45-12:15 Goals and strategies (part 1)
 In this session, small groups will identify potential goals in broad issue areas pertinent to the state's civil justice system and will develop a list of possible strategies to accomplish those goals. (Please see JAG Statewide Planning Retreat Issues List, enclosed)
- 12:15-1:00 Lunch
- 1:00-2:15 Goals and strategies (Part 2)
 The large group will review the conclusions of the small groups and participants will develop a preliminary sense of which strategies seem most feasible and valuable to pursue.
- 2:15-2:45 A snapshot view of potential strategies and quick prioritization
 Participants will identify the strategies which hold the most promise to help Maine more fully accomplish the vision of the state justice system.
- Break
- 3:00-4:00 Next steps
 In this session, the full group will discuss the optimal working group structure for the next stage of the planning process. Participants will indicate the strategies on which they are most interested in working.

Vision of a Civil Justice System in Maine

The 1990 *Report of the Maine Commission on Legal Needs*, (or Muskie Study), and *The Commission to Study Future of Maine Courts*, (1993 – 1994), made a series of recommendations about the delivery of justice in Maine. While the reports did not include explicit statements of their overall vision of the justice system of the future, their recommendations included statements that implicitly constitute a vision. The following statements represent an effort to capture that vision.

Quality of justice will not be impacted by income status.

The justice system is convenient, understandable and affordable.

Barriers to the justice system – such as those posed by geography, disability, institutionalization, language, culture, – are overcome.

Every Mainer involved with the legal system who wants and needs a lawyer can have a qualified, motivated advocate, regardless of ability to pay.

Mainers have access to a variety of means of resolving their disputes, not only in connection with court proceedings.

The courts are managed in an impartial, timely, efficient, and affordable manner that recognizes the interests of parties, other participants, and society in general, commands public respect, and uses public resources effectively.

JAG Statewide Planning Retreat Issues List

In preparing for the Retreat, the Planning Committee has identified a series of access to justice issues as discussion topics. In the Goals and Strategies Discussion (10:45 – 12:15), each small group will be assigned one issue from this list. The groups will identify potential goals related to the issue and develop a list of possible strategies to accomplish those goals. It was necessary to prepare this list for purposes of planning this Retreat; this list is not intended to be comprehensive and we hope and anticipate that participants will generate ideas not included in this list.

- 1. Reducing the Need for Crisis Intervention** – Clients' lives and the justice system (providers, pro bono, courts) are all stressed by last minute emergencies. Crisis intervention skews resource allocation away from work that would foster earlier and effective intervention. How can we help people 'upstream' before a crisis develops? *Partnerships with social service providers; develop effective models in areas of law that are particularly responsive to early intervention (or particularly vulnerable to crisis)*
- 2. Consumer friendly system** – The system is imposing and often not easily accessed. The law and process are complicated and not easily understood. How do we make the current system more user-friendly? *Training and support issues affecting low/moderate income people; plain language; intake, advice, information and referral systems; consolidated statewide intake; web-based legal information; the role of Court clerks and state agency staff; the specific impediments faced by those with limited phone access or transportation, language difficulties, distance barriers or disability*
- 3. Promoting innovation** – What innovations can we bring to the system – courts, private bar, and legal aid providers – to enhance justice or increase access to justice? *New ways to use private attorneys in this work; lawyer referral; sliding scale (private bar and legal aid providers); strategies to promote greater access in rural areas; pre-paid legal insurance; new roles for non-lawyers in the system, ADR; on-line forms, video conferencing and other technology innovations; the role of Court clerks and state agency staff; use of contract attorneys in rural areas*
- 4. Pro Se** – In a judicial system that is designed to function best when each party is represented, how do we assure access to justice for the vast number of pro se litigants in the Maine Court system? *Lay advocates; ADR (expand, and a focus to accommodate the interests of low-income Mainers); new roles for non-lawyers; expand small claims court model; best practices from state and local administrative agencies; statutory right to counsel; volunteer screeners at courthouse*
- 5. Making Institutional Changes to Enhance Access to Justice** – Laws and rules have institutionalized barriers to access to justice. How can we change these? *Unbundled legal services; Civil Gideon; changes in professional rules; statutory changes on issues that bring people into court; eliminating rules of evidence in non-jury trials involving pro ses*
- 6. Sustaining and Assuring Quality** – Access to justice must be accompanied by a commitment to the quality of the justice provided. This commitment to quality must be made by the Courts, those providing assistance (legal aid, private bar and non-lawyers), and administrative agencies. What do we mean by quality? How do we ensure, measure and report quality? *Outcome measures; best practices; competition in legal services; identifying indicia of quality such as timeliness, good customer service, results and client satisfaction*
- 7. Sustaining and Promoting Leadership for Justice** – Effective leadership has been essential in Maine's nationally recognized access to justice work. How can Maine ensure that new generations will share commitment to justice comparable to past champions like Senator Muskie? How can we promote public understanding of the importance of justice? *Systems for identifying and nurturing new leaders, including non-lawyers; Law school programs; board service (including non-lawyer business leaders); leadership opportunities designed for low-income individuals; media; faith-based community involvement*

JAG Planning Retreat Maple Hill Farm, Hallowell

March 21, 2006

Supplemental Information

- 1. Statewide Planning – Goals and Process**
- 2. Statement of Principles of Access to Justice in Texas**
- 3. Access to Justice Checklist (Sample Access to Justice Strategies)**
- 4. Background Data**

Statewide Planning – Goals and Process

Organizational Background

The Justice Action Group (JAG) was created in 1995. Its mission is to provide leadership and to assist in planning and coordinating civil legal services to the indigent statewide and to function as a public voice for the legal services community. JAG is a collaborative partnership with members from the legislature, the judiciary, the executive branch, the Maine State Bar Association, the Maine Bar Foundation, the Maine Trial Lawyers Association, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Legal Services for the Elderly, Maine Equal Justice Project/Partners, the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund and the University of Maine School of Law.

In recent years, JAG has partnered with others to move forward on a range of successful initiatives which includes: the Campaign for Justice, formed early in 2004 as a collaborative effort to encourage greater annual giving from Maine lawyers, and raising nearly \$325,000 in 2005; an effort to determine how to make Maine’s judicial system accessible to all Maine residents, regardless of language spoken; legislation passed in 2005 to increase funding through the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund; and a State Hearing Officer Training program, supported with a grant from the Maine Community Foundation.

Why Plan

An Evaluation by the Legal Services Corporation in 2004 commended Maine for its work on Access to Justice issues, finding that “[i]n the past few years Maine has served as a model among state justice communities.” One of the primary recommendations from the LSC evaluators was that Maine build on this success by engaging in a statewide planning process, creating a vision

for access to justice in the year 2020 and a roadmap to achieve the vision. This echoed thinking on this issue at the JAG. Based on that recommendation, JAG – in partnership with the Maine Bar Foundation, Maine State Bar Association and Maine’s legal services providers – has begun a statewide planning process.

This type of planning effort is not new to Maine. The Muskie Legal Needs Study released in 1990 and the Commission to Study the Future of Maine’s Courts (1993 – 94) both set out a blueprint for the future direction of Maine’s legal system. Both efforts have had significant measurable success in achieving their objectives and the current planning process will build on their work.

Broadly stated, the goals of the planning process are:

- first*, to create and implement a vision of what the civil justice system should look like as it relates to those who need the assistance of a legal professional and are not able to obtain it.
- second*, to develop a plan to make that vision a reality,
- third*, to implement the plan, and
- fourth*, and importantly, to measure and learn from the results of our work.

As we engage in planning, we will focus primarily on low-income people and others who experience barriers to access to justice such as language, distance, disability or age. Income is often used as a guideline in defining the scope of planning work such as this. Here, we consider ‘low-income’ to include individuals or families with incomes at 200% or below of the federal poverty guidelines. This includes roughly one-third of the individuals in the state, and a significantly larger percent of certain vulnerable groups. However, because specific income limits can be arbitrary and there are people above this threshold who cannot afford a lawyer, a subsidiary goal of this process is to obtain a better understanding of this group, the barriers they face and solutions to address those barriers.

We will accomplish these goals through a four step process:

1. **The March 21, 2006 Retreat**, which is designed to get broad agreement on the vision for the civil justice system in Maine and to generate ideas about goals and strategies that will help guide the long-term planning process to achieve that vision.
2. **Work Groups**, which will convene around key issues and build on the work of the Retreat, developing final objectives and creating detailed strategies to achieve those objectives.
3. A **Final Plan** will be drafted by the Statewide Planning Committee, based on the Work Group reports, and presented to JAG.
4. **Implementation** will include monitoring, evaluation and modifications as necessary. The JAG will provide oversight to the process.

Next Steps

Before leaving the Retreat, participants will be asked to identify the strategies which they are interested in working on during the planning process. Work groups will then be formed around these strategies to continue the work started at the Retreat.

Statement of Principles of Access to Justice in Texas

The following *Statement of Principles of Access to Justice in Texas* provides a sample of an access to justice statement from another state. This may be helpful as background for the Values and Vision Plenary Session (9:30 – 10:30).

- Access to justice is a fundamental right.
- Access to justice means access to all forums in which legal rights are determined.
- A key element to access to justice is an educated citizenry who have a basic understanding of their rights and the legal system.
- Meaningful access to justice requires the removal of impediments within the justice system.
- Access to justice is dependent on the availability of affordable legal representation.
- Adequate public and private funding is necessary to support legal representation for low income persons.
- Affordable legal representation must be available for moderate income persons.
- The legal profession has a special duty to assure that access to justice is recognized as a fundamental right.
- Professionalism, as it relates to assuring access to justice, should be instilled and promoted within the legal profession.
- Law schools should endeavor to instill in students an awareness of and commitment to their special responsibility to access to justice.
- Professionalism requires support of access to justice activities, including volunteer legal services to the poor and contributions to programs that provide legal services to the poor.
- Commitment to access to justice within the legal community is necessary to enhance the public's trust and confidence in the profession.
- Access to justice can be attained only if sufficient resources are allocated to the justice system and used effectively.
- Scarcity of resources compels coordination and innovation in the access to justice community to assure appropriate allocation.
- The legal profession must work in partnership with community leaders, the press, educators, elected officials and the public to ensure their support for access to justice.
- The judiciary's support in improving access to justice is critical.

Access to Justice Checklist

This list includes examples of initiatives undertaken in other states and may be helpful as you consider strategies to accomplish goals identified by the groups. The Checklist was produced by The Access to Justice Support Project (formerly SPAN, the State Planning Assistance Network), a joint project of the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association.

Education, Research, Awareness

- Supreme Court hearing or regional hearings
- Statewide Access to Justice report and recommendations
- Legal needs study
- Legal aid open houses
- Annual Access to Justice conference
- Bar/court education campaign—speakers, materials, track or sessions at bar conference, newsletters
- Media campaign—op-eds, editorial board meetings, press releases, public services announcement, video

Funding for Civil Legal Assistance

- State appropriation
- Court filing fee/fine surcharge
- Attorney registration fee surcharge or dues assessment
- Bar dues check-off or add-on
- *Pro hac vice* (practice by out-of state attorneys) fee
- Statewide private bar fundraising campaign
- Cy pres awards and structured class action settlements—education and development
- Modification of IOLTA rules/structure to increase yield
- Resource development task force or retreat
- Statewide resource development plan—by consultant or task force
- Court or legislative task force on civil legal aid funding
- Civil right to counsel—legislation and research
- National—support for LSC funding with state congressional delegation

Pro Bono

- Court-based statewide and/or regional pro bono structure
- Pro bono reporting, mandatory or voluntary
- Rule setting aspirational pro bono standards
- Continuing legal education credit for pro bono and/or related mentoring
- Recruitment campaign, led by bar and Supreme Court
- Pro bono case priority on court docket
- Emeritus rule—waiver of bar dues/fees for retired attorneys engaged in pro bono work
- Creation of web-based and other resources to support pro bono attorneys.
- Annual bench/bar conferences focused on pro bono
- Statewide data collection on current pro bono to develop ideas for expanding

Student Loan Repayment Assistance

- State appropriation
- Privately funded program
- Bar or bar foundation funded or sponsored program
- Campaign to develop law school based programs/scholarships

Court Access and Pro Se

- Statewide action plan on self-represented litigants
- Statewide action plan on litigants with limited English proficiency
- Court assistance offices, self-help centers
- Web sites with court information and forms
- Simplification and standardization of forms and pleadings
- Revision of rules to allow “unbundling” of legal services
- Training for court personnel
- Review of new rules, forms, and legislation affecting access to courts for low-income people
- Access to Justice award for judges and court staff
- Evaluation and data collection

State Agency Administrative Fairness

- Analysis and report on state agency procedures
- Awards and identification of best practices
- Training for hearing officers and agency personnel

Program/Delivery/Collaboration

- Development/expansion of capacity to serve clients who cannot be served with LSC funds
- Development/expansion of capacity to serve clients with limited English proficiency
- Development/expansion of capacity for systemic advocacy
- Substantive task forces, conferences, training and support for legal aid and volunteer advocates
- Statewide plans and staffing for coordination of advocacy, training, technology

Background Data

The following data may be helpful to you as you prepare for the Retreat:

- Maine Demographic Data
- Financial Information about Funding for Legal Aid
- Maine Legal Needs Data, including:
 - Snapshot 2005 - Data from Legal Aid Providers
 - *Pro Se* Litigants in Maine
 - *Pro Bono* Work through the Volunteer Lawyers Project
 - JAG Statewide Planning Survey – Initial Results

Maine Demographic Data

Maine Poverty Data

- The **Poverty Rate** in Maine *hangs stubbornly between 10-12%* when the economy remains relatively stable, which is near the national average; the portion that is “*near poor*” in Maine *is consistently above the national average*.
- **One third** of the population has income *at or below the 200% poverty level*, generally regarded as the income level necessary to meet the basic needs of a family of three.
- Maine’s relatively good ranking on other factors such as hunger likewise indicate that Maine is *less impacted by high levels of extreme poverty* and *more troubled by a high rate of chronically low income households* whose income hovers not far above the poverty line.
- Maine households rely more heavily on transfer payments (social security, SSI, food stamps, TANF, etc.) as a source of personal income than the national average. For example, almost a third of household income in Washington County is derived from transfer payments (social security, SSI, food stamps, TANF, etc.), compared to 13% in Cumberland County.

Preceding data from *The 2005 Report Card on Poverty*, Maine State Planning Office

Ratio of Income to Poverty, 2003 Selected Population Groups						
	Below 100%	Below 125%	Below 135%	Below 150%	Below 185%	Below 200%
All ages						
ME	11.6	17.5	19.3	21.9	29.8	32.5
US	12.5	16.9	18.9	21.7	28.3	31.1
Under 18						
ME	15.6	22.0	23.3	26.7	36.1	38.7
US	17.6	23.0	25.4	28.6	36.1	39.1
Age 65+						
ME	10.0	20.0	22.4	26.9	39.1	43.4
US	10.2	16.9	20.0	24.6	34.8	38.7
Population in Female Headed Households with Children						
ME	44.2	53.6	54.3	59.4	66.9	69.8
US	36.7	45.4	48.8	52.7	62.3	65.7

For the 2004 Report Year, Maine State Planning Office, April, 2005

Demographic Projections

- In 1990, Maine was the 8th oldest state in the nation, by 2000 it was ranked 4th.
- In 2000, 14% are over the age of 65, by 2025, that percentage will be 21%. That means one person in 5 will be over 65, and in some parts of Maine that figure will be much greater. Maine will have more people over 65 than under 20.
- In 1995, Maine was ranked 42nd among states in its proportion of people under 20. In 2025, Maine is predicted to be 49th.

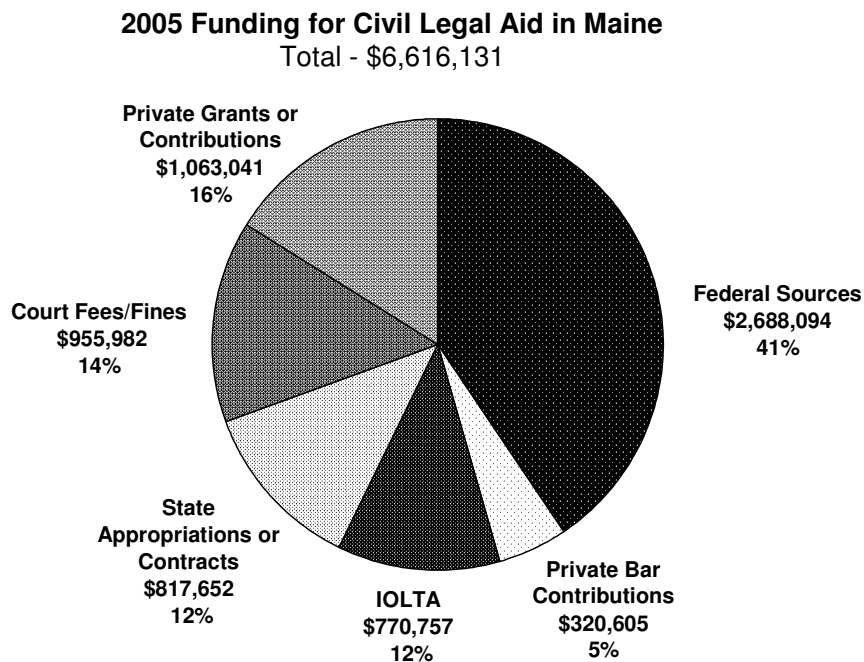
- Predictions from the state are that from 1997 to 2009, Maine will see a 9% drop in elementary students and 11% in high schools.

Diversity

- Because of limitations and constraints on getting accurate numbers, the undercount of foreign born in the United States could be anywhere from 25% - 72% - in Maine it is estimated that the undercount is around 58%, making the number of foreign born close to 58,000 .
- In 2002 ILAP served people from 109 countries.
- From 1981 – 2002 Catholic Charities of Maine resettled 4,397 refugees.
- The Maine Department of Education in 2001-02 reported that there were 78 native languages other than English spoken by children from K – 12 in Maine schools.

From a *Report on Translation and Spoken Language interpretation Services for Non-English Speaking or Limited English Proficient People in the Greater Portland Area*, Grace Valenzuela, River Rock Foundation, September 2003

Financial Information about Funding for Legal Aid



Maine Legal Needs Data

Snapshot 2005 – Data from Legal Aid Providers

On average, each month Maine’s Legal Aid Providers on average receive **3,606 calls for assistance** (Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Legal Services for the Elderly, Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, Maine Equal Justice Partners, and Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project)

These callers receive:

- Full Representation 496
- Brief Service 1,355
- Total Assisted 1,851

- Turned Away 1,755

In 2005, there were **238,099 people 60+** living in Maine and **135,501 people living in poverty** (2000 Census, federal poverty rate).

As reported by the 1990 *Maine Legal Needs Study*, low income households in Maine experience an average of one legal problem per year. Recent data from other New England States suggests the number of problems per household may actually be twice as high.

In Maine, this need is met through legal aid providers by **39 FTE attorneys** and **8.75 law students**, assisted by **16.6 FTE paralegals**.

Consistent with 1990 figures from the *Maine Legal Needs Study*, and ABA findings, Maine’s legal service providers and *pro bono* lawyers are **able to serve about 1 in 4 of the low income households with legal need**.

2005 Distribution of Legal Services for Elderly 60+ and Low Income People Across Maine Counties (2000 Census, Legal Aid Providers)					
	Maine 60+ Population: Census 2000 238,099 or 18.68%		Maine’s Population Living in Poverty 135,501* or 10.23%		
By County	% of 60+ Population	% of LSE Service 2005	% Living in Poverty	%VLP and PTLA Services	All MBF Annual Grantees
Androscoggin	8%	9.9%	8.2%	13.6%	15.6%
Aroostook	6.9%	10.0%	7.6%	9.0%	7.7%
Cumberland	19%	17.5%	15.0%	27.2%	32.3%
Franklin	2.3%	1.9%	3.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Hancock	4.5%	3.8%	3.8%	2.0%	1.9%
Kennebec	9%	8.7%	9.3%	10.4%	9.0%
Knox	3.7%	2.6%	2.9%	1.3%	1.3%
Lincoln	3.2%	1.9%	2.5%	1.0%	1.0%
Oxford	4.8%	3.2%	4.7%	2.4%	2.2%
Penobscot	10.5%	18.1%	14.0%	11.3%	9.9%
Piscataquis	1.6%	1.6%	1.9%	1.0%	1.0%
Sagadahoc	2.4%	1.6%	2.2%	2.0%	1.8%

Somerset	4%	3.5%	5.5%	2.7%	2.3%
Waldo	2.8%	3.0%	3.7%	2.0%	1.7%
Washington	3.2%	3.7%	4.6%	4.4%	4.0%
York	14%	9.0%	11.1%	7.7%	7.3%

Pro Se Litigants in Maine

A recently released report regarding the experience of *pro se* litigants in Maine found that:

The caseload of the District Court is heavily skewed towards *pro se* litigants, particularly in comparison to the Superior Court, where parties appear to be more often represented, perhaps because cases in that forum tend to be more complex and involve higher stakes. Indeed, statewide, it has recently been estimated that 40% of District Court litigants represent themselves. Small claims matters, money judgment cases, PFAs, and PFHs, FEDs, and traffic violations are all dominated by *pro se* litigants. Furthermore, in an overwhelming 75% of family matters actions at least one party is *pro se*.

Although there has not yet been done a statewide study of *pro se* litigants, this report references an unrepresentative study done by Associate Justice Dana:

While the sample size is not large enough for any conclusive findings, the Hon. Howard Dana of the Law Court conducted a survey of the dockets in Portland and Springvale District Courts. His findings preliminarily show that less than 1 in 9 defendants in FED actions are represented by a lawyer, and 4 out of 5 parties in PFH matters are not represented. He also found that defendants were much less likely than plaintiffs to be represented in family, contract, and real estate actions.

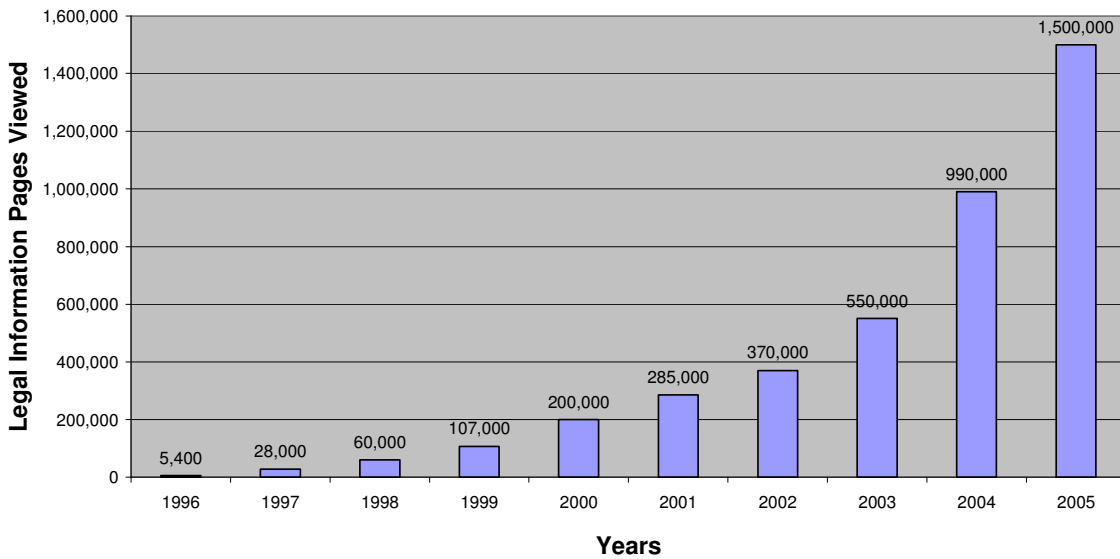
A Study Concerning Maine’s Present and Possible Future Responses to the Pro Se Question, Stacy O. Stitham, April 25, 2005, pgs. 8-9.

Pro Bono Work through the Volunteer Lawyers Project

- In 2005, more than 75 hotline volunteers answered telephone inquiries for civil legal assistance from low-income individuals throughout Maine, donating more than 6,000 hours.
- Approximately 650 cases were referred to the private bar for *pro bono* representation in 2005.
- Close to 5,000 low-income Mainers coming from 429 cities and towns throughout Maine received assistance in 2005.

Maine Civil Legal Services Fund Commission Report to the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary, 122nd Legislature, Second Regular Session, February 1, 2006

**Client Materials Provided by Legal Aid Organization Websites
1996 - 2005**

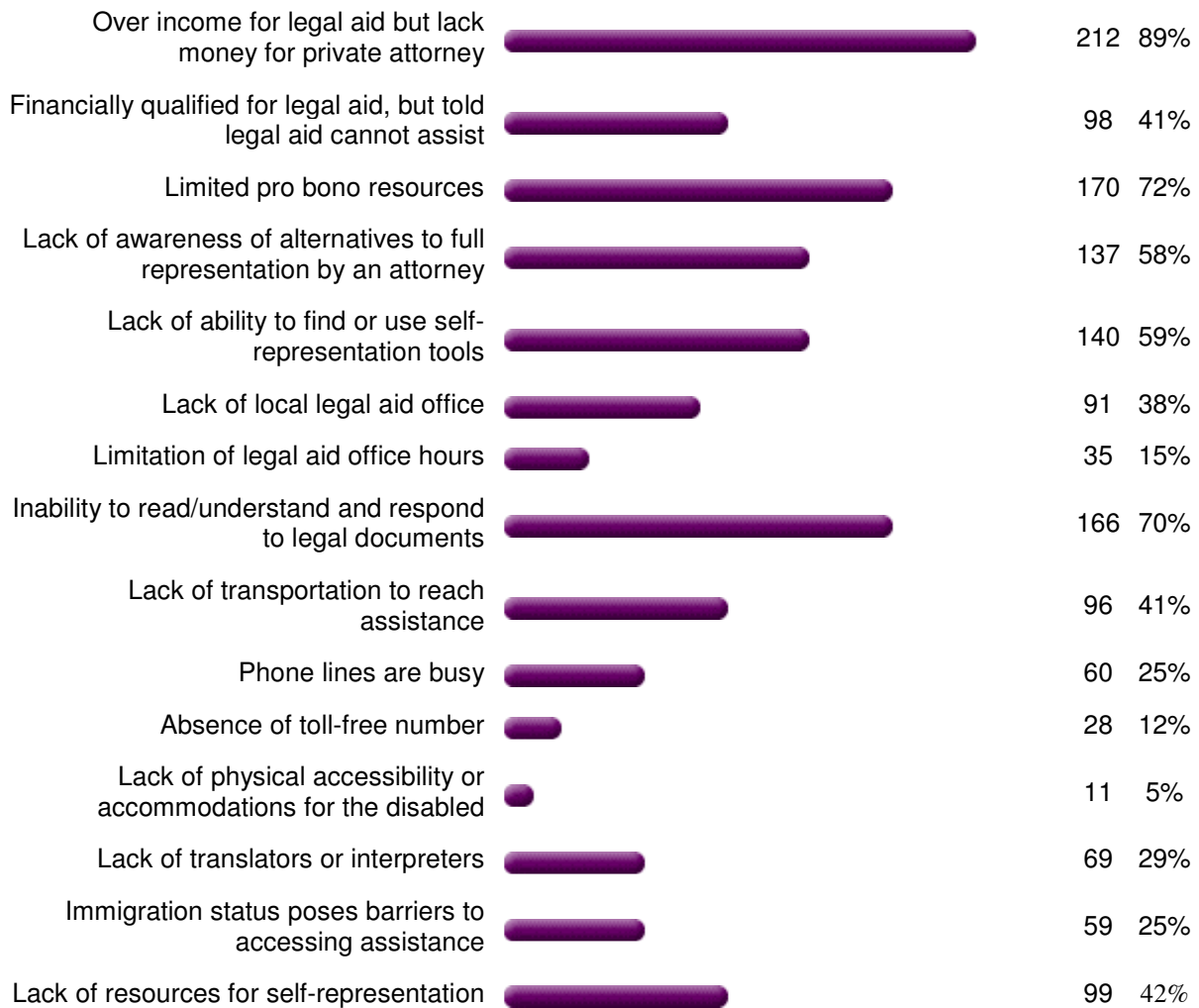


The figures for 2005 are approximate. "Legal Help" pages include interactive court forms, client information brochures and web pages, food stamp estimators and similar materials

JAG Statewide Planning Survey – Initial Results

As a means to gather information about the types of problems people were having in their encounters with the civil justice system, as well as suggestions for solutions, a survey was developed and distributed to lawyers, judges, clients, social service providers and others. One mechanism for distribution was through the MSBA e-mail list of several thousand members using Zoomerang, an electronic survey company. Responses were received primarily during the month of February 2006. Although the full results have not yet been tabulated, some of the Zoomerang results, which are tabulated automatically, are available and do provide some initial information from the perspectives of lawyers and several judges about the types of problems that people encounter. Provided below are the responses as of 3/2/06 to two of the survey questions from 239 respondents who completed the entire survey.

		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
1.	Please check all of the following you believe to be problems experienced by people in accessing Maine's civil legal system:		
	Lack of awareness that they have a legal problem	110	46%
	Lack of awareness of the availability of legal aid	158	67%



3. Please check each legal problem that you consider significant in your area of Maine, or among low-income or vulnerable people of whom you are aware:		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Don't know		16	7%
Not Applicable		1	0%
Debt collection (including court hearings and/or phone harassment)		103	44%

Federal taxes (filing or getting the earned income credit or refund check, etc.)	33	14%
State taxes (filing or getting refund, etc.)	32	14%
Bankruptcy	82	35%
Getting phones/heat/electricity installed or disconnected because of credit problems	67	29%
Consumer purchase/sales agreement that didn't work out as expected	82	35%
Problems with an auto purchase or repair	82	35%
Educational services for a child (including discipline or special ed)	93	40%
Job problems (hiring, firing, getting paid the right amount or on time, etc.)	89	38%
Problems with work-related injury and/or workers' compensation	69	29%
Problems getting unemployment compensation	38	16%
Child visitation, custody or child support	165	71%
Enforcing the terms of a court order on divorce or parental rights	150	64%
Dealing with DHS on child support collection	111	47%
A DHS notice about child abuse substantiation	73	31%
Getting needed medical services for a parent or child	80	34%
Living in unsafe housing	62	26%
Paying property taxes on a home	51	22%
Problems with a landlord (including evictions)	113	48%
Discrimination in housing, work or accommodation	41	18%
Getting or keeping welfare benefits (TANF, food stamps, 551, Medicaid, MaineCare etc.) Getting or keeping veteran's benefits	75	32%
Being sued by someone	53	23%
Divorce	155	66%
Immigration issues (work permits, green cards, deportation defense)	60	26%
Impact of crimes on immigration status	27	12%

