

Legal Aid Link

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FY10 House Budget Victory!

Months of lobbying state legislators from all corners of the Massachusetts legal community may help protect legal aid funding in next year's state budget. The [House Ways & Means FY10 budget](#) released on April 15 contained level-funding from FY09 for MLAC's line item ([0321-1600](#)). According to the Executive Summary, "The Committee...understands the potential for increased need for civil legal aid during a recession and has level funded the state's support for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation." As you may recall, Governor Patrick [proposed cutting](#) the MLAC line-item by 6.3% back in January.

The budget process will move along very quickly over the next few weeks, with House budget amendments already submitted. We are now shifting our focus to the Senate, and the Senate Ways & Means Committee in particular.

We still have a long way to go, but this is certainly an encouraging development!

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Get to Know MLAC Staff!

Meet **Donna Southwell**, our Director of Policy Analysis!

What are you working on right now?

"Right now I'm helping with the redesign of the forms that grantees use to report to MLAC each year. I'm also working on updating MLAC's standards for the Medicare Advocacy and Battered Women's Legal Assistance projects and managing some improvements to MLAC's database. Something that's always on my radar is finding ways to demonstrate the benefit of legal services."



What's something you like to do outside of the office?

"I have a new hobby that's occupying a fair amount of my time outside of work: creating [quote acrostics](#). It's hard to explain what they are, but if you do the *New York Times* Sunday magazine puzzle you'll notice a quote acrostic underneath every other week. Not by me! If anyone wants to try mine, though, just send me an email at

dsouthwell@mlac.org, and I'll be glad to send you one."

Diversity Coalition News

Diversity Coalition Structural Racism Conference

Nearly 65 members of the legal aid community attended the Structural Racism Conference on April 14 in Framingham. Coordinated by Joyce Allen-Beckford of the Diversity Coalition and the Diversity Coalition Steering Committee, the conference featured the keynote address, "Expanding Opportunity for All: Responding to the Situatedness of Marginalized Populations," by Professor John Powell of the [Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#) at The Ohio State University.

Professor Powell described the process of racialization and "targeted universalism" as a method for overcoming structural racism. According to one participant, "Hearing from Professor John Powell really is inspiring and helps me see the box I need to be outside of when thinking about race."

After lunch, the attendees split into three groups for break-out sessions facilitated by Peggy McIntosh, Joyce Johnson Shabazz and Debora Bloom. The discussions revolved around participants' own "situatedness" in our social fabric. One attendee said that "being able to share my story with others in context to today's topics made [the conference] more personal and more meaningful."

The next training in the series will focus on Age & Ageism and the benefits and challenges of having four generations in today's workplace. It will be held in the fall, and Joyce will visit programs for the training.

Equal Justice Coalition

Op-ed Press

Earlier this month, the EJC facilitated placing an Op-Ed in newspapers throughout Massachusetts. The Op-Ed was signed by both the MBA and BBA presidents, as well as seven county bar presidents.

The Op-Ed has been a great success, with at least one newspaper in every county agreeing to print it. So far, it has appeared in the *Cambridge Chronicle*, *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, *Fall River Herald News*, *Plymouth Old Colony Memorial*, *New Bedford Standard Times* and *Salem News*. You can [read the op-ed here](#).

Client News

Client Celebration Dinner

The Annual Client Celebration Dinner will take place Saturday night, April 25, at Le Meridien in Cambridge. Contact Anthony Morse at (617) 391-5635 for more information.

The Buzz

Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)

[GBLS](#) advocates' efforts paid off in two legal victories in January. First, Housing Unit attorneys **Ann Jochnick**, **Dick Bauer**, and **Mac McCreight** won an important case in

the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), *BHA v. Bridgewater*, that establishes important rights for tenants with disabilities and will probably have national impact, because it is based on federal law. The SJC determined that a federally assisted public housing authority's obligation to consider reasonable accommodations of a disabled tenant "is not optional," even when the tenant is perceived to pose a threat to others.

Second, Governor Patrick signed the Uniform Probate Code bill, including a section on guardianship reform, which will give strong due process protections to the elderly and disabled, including a right to counsel. GBLS Elder Law Unit advocates and other elder advocates have worked on guardianship reform and lobbied for this bill for several years.

In a third legal victory, from September but previously unreported, Employment Unit attorneys **Brian Flynn** and **Sherley Cruz** secured a preliminary injunction motion that the Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) must translate in nine languages all notices they send out to alert people about federal extended unemployment insurance benefits.

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM)

[LACCM](#) has two new members on its Board of Directors. **Dean Bailey**, a resident of Fitchburg, was recently appointed as a client-eligible board member. Mr. Bailey is the Youth Development Coordinator at LUK, Inc., a local social service agency, and he is also the President of the Board of Directors of the Three Pyramids organization in Fitchburg. **John Shea**, Esq., is the Managing Partner at Lian, Zarrow, Eynon & Shea, where he focuses on family law, probate and civil litigation, commercial and residential real estate and mediation. He has served as President of the Worcester County Bar Association, and is Chairperson of the Board of Directors at Community Healthlink, a local social service agency.

Sarah Loy, LACCM's Executive Assistant, was appointed to the Board of Directors of Dismas House, a non-profit organization that provides transitional housing and services to former prisoners to assist them with reintegration into society.

Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC)

On April 1, [MAC](#) kicked off its year-long 40th anniversary celebration. The first of three events planned over the next year, the kickoff was a breakfast for MAC supporters featuring speakers addressing the question, "Why invest in advocacy for children?" The other two events will be a celebratory dinner in November and an educational conference in March 2010.

Merrimack Valley - North Shore Legal Services (MVLS)

[MVNS](#) welcomes two new volunteer attorneys. **Robin Munson**, a recent law school graduate with a prior career as a small business owner, is now volunteering part-time in the consumer and family law units. **Marta Brooks**, an attorney formerly with the SeniorLAW Center in Philadelphia and Queens Legal Services, is also volunteering with MVNS. She brings with her more than 14 years of experience representing low-income seniors.

Albert Wang, an Americorp Volunteer with MVNS, was accepted to Harvard Law.

June 3: MLAC, NCLC and IOLTA Open House

On Wednesday, June 3, from 4:00pm to 6:00pm, MLAC, NCLC and the IOLTA program will hold an open house at their "new" offices at 7 Winthrop Square in Boston. Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served, and all legal services staff and board members are invited to attend. We will send out a formal invitation with RSVP information in the coming weeks.

MLAC News

[MLAC 26th Annual Meeting](#)

[MLAC](#) will hold its Annual Meeting on Monday, May 18, from 4:00pm to 6:00pm at the Boston Bar Association. All legal services staff and board members are welcome to attend. WilmerHale attorney Steve Oleskey will give the keynote address.

[Welcome Tricia Shaughnessy!](#)

Tricia began on April 6 as the new Support and Training Specialist! She will work with Wayne Welch and Karyn Telfer as part of the Central Technology Group. Tricia will oversee the Helpdesk IT support and instruct legal services staff in new software programs. She comes to MLAC with many years of experience working in the IT department of Choate Hall & Stewart.

Communications and Fundraising News

[Communications and Fundraising Roundtable](#)

The next Communications and Fundraising Roundtable discussion will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 12:00pm to 1:30pm at MLAC. All PDs and communications and fundraising staff are welcome to participate. Please RSVP to [Brienne Miers](#).

Important Dates

May 18 - MLAC Annual Meeting (Boston Bar Association)

June 3 - MLAC/NCLC/IOLTA Open House (7 Winthrop Square, Boston)

Staff Directory Reminder

Need to look up contact information for legal services staff and programs? Don't forget that you can use the online directory at www.masslegalservices.org, which contains the most up-to-date contact information for Massachusetts Legal Services staff. You first need to log-in to the site (located on the upper right of the page), and then the searchable Staff Directory will be located on the right. Alternatively, once you are logged-in, you can click on "[Directory](#)" at the top of the page to see a list of programs and their staff lists. Please note that staff contact information is only visible to Massachusetts Legal Services staff and cannot be accessed by the public.

[Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation](#)

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