

Lawyers campaign for legal services

Published: March 29, 2010

Hoping to compensate for plummeting revenues, attorneys in western Massachusetts are mounting a campaign to raise funds for legal services that help poor clients.

So far, the campaign has raised \$30,000 toward its \$50,000 goal, said Thomas A. Kenefick III of Springfield, who chairs the campaign. The effort hopes to raise the final \$20,000 with a phone drive that will solicit donations from attorneys in the four western counties - Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire.

"It's going really quite well. We are 60 percent at least toward our goal, and it has been very rewarding to know that so many attorneys recognize the importance of what legal services do," Kenefick said.

The money will be used to hire an additional attorney for Western Massachusetts Legal Services, which serves all four counties.

Legal services budgets statewide have been hard hit by shrinking revenue from the IOLTA program. To help close the gap, the Supreme Judicial Court has proposed an optional \$50 surcharge on bar renewals, while bar associations around Massachusetts have been mounting fundraising campaigns.

"There are fewer financial resources these days, and there are some pretty stark numbers out there," said Charles R. Casaretello Jr., president of the Hampden County Bar Association. "We are just trying to call attention to the problem, and lawyers, law firms and businesses are working to provide legal services to the poor and access to justice to people who would otherwise be on their own."

- Jack Dew