



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

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CONTACT:
Katie Stenz
State Bar of Wisconsin
(608) 250-6025
(608) 630-0432 (cell)
kstenz@wisbar.org

State Bar President Applauds Joint Finance for Backing Civil Legal Services Grant

Madison, WI – State Bar of Wisconsin President Robert R. Gagan has issued the following statement with regard to the legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance and its recent action approving a \$1 million grant – over two years – to the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, Inc. (WisTAF) to provide civil legal services to low income families.

The annual grants, which can be awarded up to \$75,000, will go to programs that handle domestic and sexual abuse cases, as well as restraining orders and injunctions for individuals at risk. The new funds will come from a federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.

“On behalf of the State Bar of Wisconsin I would like to express our gratitude to the members of the Joint Finance Committee for their unanimous support of a motion to provide a federal block grant to WisTAF that will increase funding for civil legal services – especially those programs that assist victims of violence.

“For too many Wisconsin residents, a fundamental promise of our democracy, equal justice under law, is simply out of reach. When these individuals need help with a legal problem, they cannot afford professional legal help and cannot effectively represent themselves, and then they fall into the ‘justice gap.’ These individuals are in serious crisis and cannot be left behind by our justice system.

“The State Bar fully supports WisTAF as the recipient of these funds. It is an exemplary organization with a long history of bringing justice to those in greatest need.

“By approving this financial measure, members of the Joint Finance Committee are affirming our deeply held passion for justice and protection of the most vulnerable.”

WisTAF administers grants from the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program and the Public Interest Legal Services Fund (PILSF) program. Both programs were established by the Wisconsin Supreme Court to make the state’s justice system accessible to all, regardless of income.

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The State Bar of Wisconsin is the mandatory professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 25,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit www.wisbar.org.