

## LINDNER HONORED WITH CHAMPION OF JUSTICE AWARD

The Equal Justice Illinois Campaign and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation presented State Representative Patricia Reid Lindner (R, 50th) with the 2008 Champion of Justice Award at a reception at Brasserie Jo in downtown Chicago. Lindner was recognized for her steadfast commitment and years of work dedicated to protecting the civil legal rights of low-income families, elderly and children.

"State Representative Lindner's leadership and support of civil legal aid has helped bring safety and stability to the lives of thousands of Illinois residents," said Christine Ory, president of



IEJF President Chris Ory and Campaign Chair Phil Rock thank Representative Pat Lindner (right) for her dedication to legal aid issues.

the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation.

"I am truly honored to receive the Champion of Justice Award. I strongly believe we must continue to level the playing field so that all residents, including low-income families and seniors, are provided equal access to our justice system," said Representative Lindner.

Elected to the State House in 1992, Representative Lindner has supported legal aid funding and demonstrated a deep dedication to the principle of "equal protection under the law" throughout her distinguished career. She was an original sponsor of the Illinois Equal Justice Act [30 ILCS 765/(1999)] and an active member of the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign's Blue Ribbon Committee.

Representative Lindner retired in January but continues to be a loyal supporter of increasing the state appropriation for these critical legal services.

...continued Equip for Equality's Special Education Clinic/Helpline

All of these diverse issues are addressed by the Special Education Clinic/Helpline in its quest to ensure that children obtain a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as required by law. Parents can turn to the Helpline for accurate, up-to-date information about their child's rights as well as legal advice and alternative options that they should consider. All callers speak with a lawyer or an advocate who has experience or training in special education. The agency also uses the Helpline to determine which cases may require further representation.

Once parents have a basic understanding of public schools' legal obligations in a specific situation and are given strategies to use in advocating for their student with school personnel, the vast majority are able to get the problem resolved without further involvement of attorneys.

"Much of the Helpline service is giving parents tools so they can advocate for their children," said Barry C. Taylor, Legal Advocacy Director for Equip for Equality. "When the situation becomes more adversarial, that's when we try to get involved more directly, either with our own staff or with one of our pro bono attorneys."

The Helpline has served more than 1,000 families since 2007 and the number of families is expected to grow as word of the Helpline reaches more parents.

***"We are very grateful for this support from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation. Without it, our Helpline would not have become a reality."***

- Olga Pribyl

In order to provide adequate support to the increasing number of callers, the Helpline relies on the assistance of volunteer attorneys and law student interns. The Helpline recently partnered with the law firm Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP on a pilot project aimed at enabling volunteer attorneys to handle live intake calls in the comfort of their own offices. Live calls will be forwarded at scheduled times and Helpline attorneys will be available by phone and email to answer any questions that come up during a call.

"I am excited that a major law firm has agreed to take part in this initiative," said Helpline Intake Manager Debra Wysong. "This will be critical in empowering parents with legal information so they can effectively advocate for their children."

**For more information about the Special Education Clinic/Helpline, visit:**  
[www.equipforequality.org/programs/specialeducation/](http://www.equipforequality.org/programs/specialeducation/).

SPRING 2009

## IN THIS ISSUE

### GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: EQUIP FOR EQUALITY'S SPECIAL EDUCATION CLINIC/HELPLINE

Equip For Equality receives funding to provide critical legal aid services for families of students with special education needs through a unique statewide telephone advice and referral helpline.

### BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILES

In this issue, we feature Blue Ribbon Committee members Philip Harnett Corboy, Jr. and James R. Jenkins, both dedicated supporters of increased state funding for civil legal aid.

### IEJF ANNOUNCES 2009 GRANTS AND PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR

This year the IEJF has awarded over \$3.3 million in grants to 22 not-for-profit legal aid organizations serving low-income families seniors and veterans across the state. Looking ahead, the IEJF advocates for level funding in fiscal 2010 in order to cope with increasing demand for civil legal services.

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# EQUAL JUSTICE ILLINOIS CAMPAIGN

SPRING 2009

## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: EQUIP FOR EQUALITY'S SPECIAL EDUCATION CLINIC/HELPLINE

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation has awarded Equip for Equality a \$95,000 grant for the 2009 fiscal year to provide legal advice, information and referrals on special education legal issues through its statewide telephone advice and referral service.

"We are very grateful for this support from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation. Without it, our Helpline would not have become a reality," said Olga Pribyl, the Managing Attorney of Equip for Equality's Special Education Clinic/Helpline.

The mission of Equip for Equality is to advance the human and civil rights of children and adults with physical and mental disabilities in Illinois. It is the only statewide, cross-disability, comprehensive advocacy organization providing self-advocacy assistance, legal services, and disability rights education while also engaging in public policy and legislative advocacy and conducting abuse investigations and other oversight activities.

The Special Education Clinic/Helpline provides a critical service for the families of more than 320,000 public school students in Illinois with special education needs. A comprehensive 2005 Illinois legal needs study sponsored by various bar groups and foundations found that low-income households did not receive legal help for 92.1 percent of education-related problems. The study also found that 51.1 percent of all education-related legal problems of low-income Illinoisans involved either denial of special education services or provision of inappropriate special education services.

The Clinic/Helpline was launched in 2007 in response to widespread noncompliance by schools with the federal special education law, known as the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). Under the IDEA, public schools must engage with the parents of children with disabilities to develop

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that provide services and accommodations to help them learn.

More than 30 years after the passage of the IDEA, students with disabilities continue to encounter great difficulties when attempting to secure their legal rights. Many students with disabilities are not identified as needing special education services and are instead labeled troublemakers and expelled from schools. Other times, parents wait months to obtain evaluations from schools to determine why their child is failing or doing poorly. Many students identified as needing special education services do not have an appropriate IEP, while others have an appropriate IEP but the school fails to fully implement it. In addition, students with special education needs are often unnecessarily segregated from their non-disabled peers and thereby denied the development of social skills that they will need in order to eventually transition from the school environment to the outside world.

continued inside...



Jennifer's family turned to the Helpline when her school attempted to deny her legal rights as a student with special education needs. "We will never be able to thank the Clinic/Helpline enough for all the help we received," said Jennifer's mother.

## ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

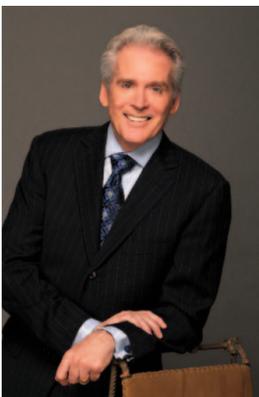
The Equal Justice Illinois Campaign is a bi-partisan coalition of state leaders working to increase state funding of civil legal aid so that all Illinois residents – regardless of income – have access to the justice system. The Campaign is housed within the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, the organization that distributes the state's annual funding for legal aid.

The legal system in Illinois currently operates near breaking point. There are less than 400 legal aid lawyers to help the more than 1.5 million Illinois residents living in poverty. Out of the ten most populous states, Illinois ranks near the bottom when it comes to legal aid funding, spending \$3.5 million compared to the average of \$10.7 million.

As a result, the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign is calling on the state to do its share and increase funding for civil legal aid so that this critical safety net can be strengthened. For more information, visit [www.equaljusticeillinois.org](http://www.equaljusticeillinois.org).

## BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE

### Philip Harnett Corboy, Jr.



A partner in the law firm of Corboy & Demetrio, Mr. Corboy's practice centers on representing plaintiffs in serious personal injury and wrongful death cases. Prior to joining Corboy & Demetrio, he worked in the criminal division of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office as a first chair prosecutor responsible for trying murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping cases. He is currently President of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association as well as President of the Board of Directors of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago and a member of the Board of Trustees of the President's Club of DePaul University.

## Q & A

In addition to your involvement with the Campaign, you are currently President of the Board of LAF – please tell us why you are dedicated to legal aid?

I was born into a family of lawyers and have seen what good lawyers can do. Unfortunately, throughout my career I have also seen that there are many people who do not have equal access to the justice system. It is our obligation to help those less fortunate since a society is judged by how it treats its young, old, poor and disabled – and those four groups make up the majority of legal aid clients.

What motivated you to serve on the Blue Ribbon Committee?

After speaking with Leslie Corbett and being told of the difficulties the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation was having with the state funding process, I felt it was my obligation to do anything I could to assist with the Campaign and get the commitment from the state delivered into the hands of the people who need it most.

Why do you believe it is necessary to increase the state appropriation for civil legal services?

As a member of LAF's Board of Directors for 12 years, I have seen how important it is to get any and all monies we can to legal aid agencies in Illinois because of the unprecedented need for civil legal assistance in recent years. More and more people are coming to the doors of these agencies and many of them will have to be turned away without additional funding.

## A ROLLER COASTER RIDE TO LEVEL FUNDING

2008 was nothing short of a roller coaster ride for the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign and the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF). Read on for a rundown of the ups, the downs and the loopy-loops!

Throughout May 2008, the IEJF worked to pass Senate Bill 3028 to increase the state appropriation for civil legal services from \$3.5 million to a much-needed \$5 million. The bill, sponsored by Senator Jeff Schoenberg (D-9), was co-sponsored by Senators Jacqueline Collins (D-16), John Cullerton (D-6), Kirk Dillard (R-24), Don Harmon (D-39), Mike Noland (D-22), Kwame Raoul (D-13), Heather Steans (D-7) and Dave Syverson (R-34) and supported by the Attorney General, the Illinois State Bar Association, the Chicago Bar Association, the DuPage County Bar Association and the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Although the bill was not passed, the IEJF was still included at the \$5 million level in the budget passed by the General Assembly. Unfortunately, we soon learned that the IEJF was one of many social service organizations whose funding had been slashed by former Governor Blagojevich in his efforts to balance the budget. We therefore entered our grant season with a budget of \$2 million, dropping the IEJF back to its 2006 fiscal year funding level. Thankfully, Attorney General Lisa Madigan stepped in and included \$1.5 million for the IEJF in a sweep of her litigation funds, reinstating funding for civil legal aid to \$3.5 million in November 2008.

Despite the ongoing budgetary turbulence, the IEJF stayed the course, attempting to award grants to deserving non-profit civil legal aid providers across the state. The Board of Directors met in October and approved grant recommendations for both the \$2 million and possible \$3.5 million appropriation levels. A \$2 million appropriation would have resulted in the IEJF having to cut five organizations from the grant pool and slash most other grants to the 2006 funding level. Among those on the chopping block were groups serving veterans, homeless children and immigrants. Thankfully, when the funds were finally reinstated in November, only one organization was cut and legal aid organizations across the state could breathe a collective sigh of relief.

So, who benefited from level funding? Twenty-two legal aid organizations from Rockford to Carbondale as well as the low-income families, seniors and veterans they serve. These funds are providing a critical safety net for many Illinois residents this year as the legal aid community struggles to raise funds in this troubled economy. This funding is extremely important, particularly given the dramatic decline in the income level of the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois (LTF), the second largest legal aid funder in the state. LTF's income is generated from the pooled interest on lawyers' trust accounts and has been adversely affected by plunging interest rates.

**The Equal Justice Illinois Campaign is advocating for level funding of \$3.5 million for the 2010 fiscal year.** A funding cut would cripple the legal aid system as it tries to cope with increasing demand for services. Furthermore, legal aid providers are among the few social service organizations equipped to address the current mortgage foreclosure crisis. Any reduction in the state appropriation for civil legal services would exacerbate the legal crises faced by many state residents in dire need of assistance.

## EQUAL JUSTICE ILLINOIS CAMPAIGN BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

The Honorable **James R. Thompson**, Co-Chair

The Honorable **Philip J. Rock**, Co-Chair

**Linda Renee Baker**, Professor, Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, Southern Illinois University

The Honorable **Patricia R. Bellock**, State Representative, 47th District

The Honorable **Dorothy Brown**, Clerk, Circuit Court of Cook County

**James Buda**, General Counsel, Caterpillar Inc.

**Jack Carey**, President, Illinois State Bar Association

**Robert Clifford**, Clifford Law Offices

**Philip Harnett Corboy, Jr.**, Corboy & Demetrio

The Honorable **Jerry Costello**, US Congressman, 12th District

**Joseph Dailing**, Executive Director, Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice

The Honorable **Richard M. Daley**, Mayor, Chicago, IL

The Honorable **Ken Dunkin**, State Representative, 5th District

The Honorable **Timothy Evans**, Chief Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County

**Dennis Gannon**, President, Chicago Federation of Labor

The Honorable **Karen Hasara**, Board Campaign Committee Chair, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation

The Honorable **Janet Holmgren**, Chief Judge, 17th Judicial Circuit

The Honorable **Dallas Ingemunson**, Former Illinois Republican Party Chairman & Kendall County State's Attorney

**James Jenkins**, General Counsel, Deere & Company

The Honorable **James Knecht**, Judge, 4th District Appellate Court

The Honorable **Lisa M. Madigan**, Attorney General, State of Illinois

**Christine Ory**, President, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation

**Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki**, Archdiocese of Chicago

**Jerry Roper**, President, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce

**Jesse H. Ruiz**, Drinker, Biddle, Gardner & Carton, LLP

The Honorable **Jeff Schoenberg**, State Senator, 9th District

**David Stricklin**, Stricklin & Associates

The Honorable **James Wexsten**, Judge, 5th District Appellate Court

The Honorable **Jesse White**, Secretary of State of Illinois

The Honorable **Kenneth Wright**, President, The Chicago Bar Association

## ILLINOIS EQUAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION AWARDS OVER \$3.3 MILLION IN GRANTS

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF) has awarded over \$3.3 million in grants for fiscal year 2009 to 22 not-for-profit organizations that provide legal representation, information and advice to low-income residents facing critical civil legal challenges throughout the state. The grants range in scope from funding for web-based legal information resources and telephone advice hotlines to mediation and full-scale litigation. The IEJF also supports legal aid programs that partner with county courthouses, public libraries and community-based social service organizations to offer help where and when people need it, and to develop solutions to life problems, not just legal problems.

*“With these grants, legal aid organizations are able to directly help protect the legal rights of some of our most vulnerable residents...”*

“With these grants, legal aid organizations are able to directly help protect the legal rights of some of our most vulnerable residents, including children, people with disabilities, the elderly, veterans and working families,” said Christine M. Ory, president of the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation and former president of the DuPage County Bar Association. “Our mission is to support programs that empower people to resolve their legal issues and regain control of their lives. Last year, our grants enabled over 68,000 low-income people to receive legal assistance and provided web-based legal resources that were accessed more than 400,000 times.”

The number of people in Illinois living in extreme poverty is increasing and the legal aid system continues to operate in crisis mode amid rising demand for legal services. More than 686,000

people in Illinois struggle to survive on incomes less than \$10,000 for a family of four and simply cannot afford to hire a lawyer when confronted with legal problems.

The IEJF focuses on funding not-for-profit programs that help low-income families, children and seniors secure basic human needs including safety, shelter, economic stability and education. These programs address mortgage foreclosure, domestic violence, elder abuse, homelessness, veterans' benefits, special education, consumer fraud and predatory lending. In recognition of high poverty rates and limited access to civil legal services in rural areas, almost 61 percent of the IEJF's grants went to organizations serving either downstate communities or the entire state.

Despite level funding from the state in 2008, the IEJF was able to provide grants for new projects in its quest to support innovative, cost-effective initiatives to help low-income people understand the legal system and resolve their routine legal problems more effectively. The Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation and Prairie State Legal Services were awarded grants to develop 10 new court and library-based self-help legal information centers serving the rural poor in downstate counties. The Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago was also awarded a grant to provide civil legal assistance on veterans' benefits issues.

Below is a complete list of the 2009 grants. For more details, visit: [www.iejf.org/grants/recipients\\_09.html](http://www.iejf.org/grants/recipients_09.html).

## BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE

### James R. Jenkins



Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Deere & Company, Mr. Jenkins has worldwide executive management responsibility for the Law, Patent, Corporate Compliance and Public Affairs departments. Before joining Deere & Company, Mr. Jenkins was Vice President, Secretary and General Counsel at Dow Corning Corporation. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree and his Juris Doctor from the University of Michigan and also attended the Program for Management Development at Harvard Business School.

## Q & A

What motivated you to serve on the Blue Ribbon Committee?

The mission and purpose of the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign, and the possibility of helping to make a difference in this time of substantial and often staggering need.

Why are you committed to the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign?

I am committed to the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign because I believe that everyone should have an equal chance for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Why do you believe it is necessary to increase the state appropriation for civil legal services?

It is necessary to increase and expand the scope of the state appropriation for civil legal services because there is a tremendous, yet well occupied gap between those eligible for legal aid services and those who can afford to pay for law services without great sacrifice.

## ILLINOIS EQUAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION 2009 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation (Alton, Champaign, East St. Louis, Carbondale and Springfield) (\$721,000)	Cabrini Green Legal Aid (Chicago) (\$70,000)
Prairie State Legal Services (Carol Stream, Waukegan, Galesburg, Peoria, Ottawa, Batavia and St. Charles) (\$658,250)	Resolution Systems Institute (Downstate) (\$70,000)
Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (Chicago & Suburban Cook County) (\$353,792)	Southern Illinois University School of Law Foundation (Carbondale) (\$62,500)
Coordinated Advice & Referral Program for Legal Services (Cook County) (\$320,000)	Life Span Center for Legal Services (Chicago) (\$60,000)
Illinois Legal Aid Online (Statewide) (\$200,000)	Immigration Project (Bloomington) (\$50,000)
Equip for Equality (Chicago, Rock Island, Carbondale & Springfield) (\$160,000)	National Immigrant Justice Center (Chicago, Berwyn, Waukegan) (\$50,000)
Center for Conflict Resolution (Chicago) (\$135,000)	Will County Legal Assistance Program (Joliet) (\$50,000)
Chicago Legal Clinic (Chicago) (\$100,000)	Kankakee Center for Conflict Resolution of the John R. Tate Advocacy Center (Kankakee) (\$38,000)
Chicago Volunteer Legal Services (Chicago) (\$100,000)	Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (Statewide) (\$30,000)
Legal Aid Bureau of Metropolitan Family Services (Chicago) (\$90,000)	DePaul College of Law Asylum & Immigration Clinic (Chicago) (\$25,000)
	Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (Chicago) (\$20,000)
	Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (Chicago) (\$15,000)