

**Justice Action Group
JAG Executive Committee**

March 24 – 3:00 p.m.
LOCATION: **Via ZOOM**

MINUTES

Zoom Participants: Hon. Andrew Mead, Hon. Ellen Gorman, Hon. Karen Wolfe, Charlie Dingman, Sue Roche, Lauri Boxer-Macomber, Tim Pease, Judith Fletcher Woodbury, Michelle Draeger.

I. Welcome/Introductions

II. Approval of Minutes from July 1, 2024. No additions or corrections noted. Minutes accepted and made part of the permanent record. No additions or corrections noted for the Inventory.

III. Report from Chair – J. Mead

- a. **AmeriCorps Pledge** – Crystal William’s Alpha Organization is working (under the auspices of the AmeriCorps program) to create a pilot program for navigators for the Maine courts system. Navigators are not lawyers, but will be trained to assist unrepresented individuals find their way around the court system. The formal pledge for the participants pledge took place on March 17 at the Hall of Flags at the Legislature. Justice Mead administered the pledge.
- b. **Planning for ATJ Day at the Legislature** – ATJ Day is April 17. See update from Charlie Dingman (below).
- c. **Funding strategies/status of federal grants** – See update from Charlie Dingman (below)

IV. Vice Chair’s Report and Pro Bono Committee Report – J. Wolf

Justice Mead and Magistrate Wolf will be appearing via Zoom at the May 14 at the MSBA Bar talk 11:30 a.m. They will be talking about tax and CLE credit programs.

The Pro Bono Committee has been taking its message on the road to try to improve and increase pro bono engagement following on the heels of obtaining changes to the bar rules so that lawyers can receive CLE credit

for providing pro bono work. Justices Mead and Wolf spoke at the Winter Bar meeting in January and in February the committee spoke at the Portland and Bangor Inns of Courts. These talks were well received.

A planned April 3, in-networking reception for in-house counsel to improve and increase pro bono programs within Maine businesses had to be cancelled due to anticipated low attendance. At the moment, it appears that in-house counsel are dealing with changes to their business structure due to the executive orders regarding DEI and other matters. The Committee is working toward creating a video which will have speakers from the legal aid providers and outside speakers talk about development programs that can be distributed to organizations and companies with lawyers who might be able to perform pro bono services.

On a side note, Sue Laroche received one of the four community awards at the International Woman's Day Fashion Show Gala.

V. ACP Chair's Report – E. Gorman/ Rotating Representative

Funding is becoming problematic. Some grant applications are in limbo. Whether there is going to be federally funding for grants or existing programs is up in the air. All of the providers are dealing with not only day-day-day operations but also employees asking about their jobs and are worrying if they can fill any openings. The providers are still doing amazing work and meeting their benchmarks.

There is a lot of information and misinformation being disseminated regarding the recently issued Executive Orders. Providers are busy addressing concerns coming from within and outside their organizations.

VI. Justice Systems Committee Report – Lauri Boxer-Macomber

The JAG Justice Systems Committee March 19 Report includes references to difficulties reported by various providers regarding requests for remote video proceedings in, for instance, eviction proceedings and proceedings involving immigrants. Justice Gorman mentioned that remote video proceedings would lessen the demand for courtrooms during the extensive renovations on the Portland courthouse HVAC systems. The Justice Systems Committee discussed various types of hearings that could be effectively conducted via video. Justice Mead suggested that a brief meeting between the Chiefs and various providers

and professional organizations might be helpful to discuss concerns and offer approaches. Justice Mead will see if a brief meeting might be convened.

VII. Legislative Committee Report – Charlie Dingman

Update on legislative goings-on/status of JAG/providers' initiatives

The Legislative Committee is meeting the week of March 31 to talk about preparation for ATJ Day. The Committee has been busy advocating for inclusion in the budget but was unsuccessful in first round. The session is divided into two parts. If it works for the committee, the hearing on Sen. Carney's bill on will be on ATJ Day. We will want a significant appearance by providers for the hearing. They plan on Justice Mead's presentation being followed by the hearing on the bill. Justice Mead and Magistrate Wolf will try to visit all four caucuses.

They have made contacts with more legislators on multiple occasions which is bearing fruit. Legislators have agreed that the budget should be augmented.

Justice Mead asked whether the criminal indigent services crisis is an impediment to our requests, or do we get more attention on the civil side because of it. Charlie reported that more and more legislators are understanding the distinction and are understanding of our plight.

VIII. Executive Committee Organization Optional Updates:

NOTE: In response to earlier inquiries, representatives from individual provider organizations are more than welcome to attend Executive Committee meetings, but attendance and reports are optional.¹

- **Maine Judicial Branch** - E-filing and CMS – we hoped to go live w/limited criminal matters in Lewiston by now, but the rollout date is being moved to the future due in large part to Tyler Technologies encountering challenges in accommodating our specific needs. We continue to work very hard to get the expanded modules out as soon as possible.
- **Katahdin Counsel** - The Katahdin Council numbers are steady, but we looking to restructure the engagement and reporting schedules to

¹ The providers have historically designated a rotating representative from the provider ranks to attend the EC meetings in addition to the ACP counsel representative.

avoid the crush of information as the Board of Overseers collates the data and reports it to us.

- **Volunteer Lawyers Project** – No one present to report.
- **Maine Justice Foundation** - Michele reports that the MJF is working on an IOLTA report which is due to the court by April 15. The roster of members of the MJF standing committee for the Access to Justice Tax Credit will be updated. Judy shared that Walt McKee will be the MTLA representative, and Susan Faunce and Jonathan Dunitz will represent the MSBA. Tim Pease will co-chair the MJF with Judy and then he will step in as president when Judy steps down.
- **Maine State Bar Association/Lawyers in Libraries** - No one present to report.
- **Maine Trial Lawyers Association** – Lauri state the MLTA just held their annual meeting. Walt McKee is the new president. They continue to offer regular monthly seminars and offer discounts to the legal service providers for any CLEs they are holding. Lauri offered to take Judge Wolf's presentation to coordinate with her to hold a session on her pro bono encouragement.

The MTLA's legislative committee met to plan support for Sen. Carney's legislation for more funding for civil legal services.

- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance** - No one present to report.
- **Law School/Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic** - No one present to report.
- **Legal Services for the Elderly** - No one present to report.
- **Maine Equal Justice** - No one present to report.
- **Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project** – Sue reports that the vulnerable communities are at risk. The impact on their clients is that many benefits are eroding, and they are scared. It is difficult to give confident advice to them due to the uncertain future. There have been very sad situations regarding detentions including those who have had processes in place including some unaccompanied juveniles. Their office is trying to get general information out.

Justice Gorman states that in regard to ICE's increase in power and interest in detaining people, those people are unwilling to go to courthouse because they are worried about being detained which is an access to justice issue.

IX. Other Business: no other business

X. 2025/2026 JAG Executive Committee and Board meeting dates:

Board:

October 27, 2025 - Portland (Feeney Conference Room)

February 24, 2026 - Portland (Feeney Conference Room)

Executive Committee:

March 24, 2025 - Via Zoom

May 27, 2025 - Augusta (CJC, 4th Floor SJC suite)

September 15, 2025 - Augusta (CJC, 4th Floor SJC suite)

January 26, 2026 - Via Zoom