

**Justice Action Group
JAG Executive Committee**

September 15, 2025 – 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Capital Judicial Center and by Zoom

MINUTES

In-person participants: Hon. Andrew Mead, Hon. Valerie Stanfill, Charlie Dingman, Michelle Daeger, Courtney Beer

Zoom participants: Hon. Ellen Gorman, Hon. Karen Wolfe, Lauri Boxer-Macomber, Judith Fletcher Woodbury, Tom, Fritzsche, John Brautigam

I. Welcome/Introductions

II. Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2025

III. Report from Chair – J. Mead

a. Chief Justice Stanfill –

Foreign-trained attorneys/Legal Paraprofessionals – Chief Justice Stanfill addressed the group and reported that there have been discussions at the national level as well as local level to explore ways to increase access to justice. We have been evaluating the possibility providing qualified lawyers who have been trained or admitted in other countries with the opportunity to take the bar exam. Suggestions have been made for allowing paraprofessionals (who would be licensed or accredited in some fashion) who could offer fee-based legal services in discreet areas of law and specific tasks. A task force will likely be empaneled to explore challenges and opportunities. If any of the providers would be interested in serving on such a task force, please let the Chief know.

The Chief Justice reported on a couple of current projects and other court related undertakings:

Court Navigators - The court navigator project was accomplished via grant funding in Washington County. Having a knowledgeable person

at the courthouse is beneficial across case types where all parties are uncertain as to where to go, what to do, and how to secure legal assistance.

Volunteer greeters - There are two volunteer greeters in Biddeford which is helpful for people who arrive at the courthouse uncertain and apprehensive.

b. Justice Mead reported:

Odyssey - In June, all cases in Lewiston/Auburn have been converted to e-filing. With the criminal module operational, it's been found that the processes have been catered to lawyers and the court clerks are expected to do things for them regarding e-filing, etc. All case types for Region 4 will be converted after the first of the year. The civil e-filing is going well.

Judge-led Commissions- When JAG started, Maine was at the forefront with this judge-led commission, but we have been left behind by those states that have statutory and larger funding and it may be time that we pivot to something similar. The concept of JAG has both advantages and disadvantages for judges (they are limited as to permissible type of advocacy and funding). It may be time to move it to a commission authorized by statute which may help with funding whether its sought by grant or by legislative.

Justice Gorman stated that the legislature pays more attention when Justice Mead speaks to them and it may be problematic if judicial seats are removed from JAG.

Charlie noted that the providers are currently so underfunded that asking the legislature to find money for overhead when they can't find money for direct services is difficult. One of the inhibiting factors is that it comes with a cost at time when the providers are struggling to maintain.

Justice Mead stated that JAG is doing well with communications and advocacy. In the past when we had executive coordinators, we could undertake stand-alone projects and initiatives, but without that level of administrative support, those undertakings are beyond our

capabilities. The national ATJ registers list Andrew Mead as the Executive Director of the Maine Justice Action Group and Toni as the staff.

- c. **Justice Systems change of leadership**-Jaye Martin's position will be replaced by two co-chairs, Ben Jenkins and Deirdre Smith. Everyone agreed unanimously to have Ben and Deirdre to be co-chairs.
- d. **LSE change of leadership; September 25 event** – Jaye Martin stepped down and John Brautigam is the new Executive Director. A “Passing the Torch” Celebration will be held at Maple Hill Farm in Hallowell on 9/25.
- e. **VLP change of leadership** – Courtney Beers announced that Nell Brimmer is the new Executive Director for the VLP. Kathryn will make a future introduction with Nell.

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

The pro bono just met after summer break. On Oct. 22, committee will be having a Zoom Lunch and Learn sponsored by the Cumberland Bar Association. Nell Brimmer will represent the VLP. Representatives from ILAP, PTLA, and LSE will be there. It will include a panel discussion about the overwhelming need of pro bono engagement and work. In January, the committee will undertake another in-house panel discussion on pro bono for in-house counsel. Many thanks to the law school and Marcia Levy for leadership in pro bono and other ATJ efforts. Arranged for the meeting on the 9th to have Ben Everett (Swanson Law) speak.

And we should take a moment to recognize people who passed who were very involved with Access to Justice: Joe Lewis, Steve Wessler, Nancy Rabasca, and Joel Vincent.

V. ACP Chair's Report – E. Gorman

Members of the ACP took August off. ILAP has been very busy but now have a new member to assist in the workload. Multiple organizations—particularly ILAP—have been significantly affected and burdened by recent efforts by ICE to pick up persons who are being held or deported.

VI. Justice Systems Committee Report – John Brautigam

Report attached to agenda

VII. Legislative Committee Report – Charlie Dingman

- a. Update on legislative goings-on/status of JAG/providers’ initiatives. First, the providers will be sending a letter to the Civil Legal Services Commission relating to how the \$3 million dollars that was allocated should be distributed and asking the commission to avoid the “cliff” in its second year by allocating the \$2 million the first year so there is no reduction in funding giving us a little bit of leeway to try to persuade the legislature about the fourth million.

Regarding the fourth million: We are going to ask for a reasonable increase in funding to meet the overwhelming need. In July, we met with Senator Carney. The Judicial Branch did testify in favor of funding which might change things. Sen. Carney has been in contact with Sen. Rotundo to talk about how the Appropriations Committee might be involved.

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.¹

- **Maine Trial Lawyers Association - Lauri Boxer-Macomber**

They are offering its regular trial on skills series this fall. There is a session this week and legal service providers and new attorneys are offered discounted rates. MTLA membership is free to attorneys are 3 years or less into their practice. Will raise some of the issues that are being raised at this meeting at the next board meeting. JAG members are invited to reach out to leaders of the trial community with some of these issues.

Lauri has been trying to make herself available for free or at a discounted rate for those who are seeking ADR. Maybe people should reach out to Diane Kenty and explore those who are skilled mediators to assist.

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.

- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance – Tom Fritzsche**

Six new attorneys have started working PTLA. Three attorneys are Maine Law alums including one working in the Presque Isle office who is the second recipient of the Elinor & Charles Miller Rural Justice Fellow.

- **Law School/Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic – Courtney Beer**

The rural practice clinic is still going and looking for funding to keep that going. Currently the funding is coming from the AG's office, but it will run out. Chris Northrup has recruited students a year out and has students starting in the spring and summer and there is a wait list as students are very excited.

The human rights clinic has reached a lot of people working with those in ICE detention in the county jails. CLAC is working with ILAP on this project. With additional allocation from MCILS, we hired a faculty member which supports PFA work in Lewiston.

CLAC just hired and will launching a business and law clinic in the January term which is being funded by the Alfonds. Its in collaboration of the business school. It's a lean budget with one faculty position and the cost of student housing. Its about \$250-300k per year to run it. Chris teaches a class at UMFK each semester. The two students that were hired for next are looking to start a new firm in northern Maine when they are out of law school. Chris is looking to retire next summer so they want to hire someone for two years (into 2028).

- **Maine Justice Foundation – Michelle Drager**

There are a lot of grants rolling out. Racial justice grants have been approved and will be distributed they the end of the fiscal year. The LGBTQ+ grants are moving forward. There is also a Fairness and Justice fund, and a couple of other grants, that were made this year to ILAP and to Greater Immigrant Welcome Center. ATJ tax credits have been awarded to a new group of attorneys. The IOLTA fund looks firm, although we are not generating as much income as last year but still over budget so there may be supplemental distribution after the audit.

- Maine Judicial Branch - No one present to report.
- Volunteer Lawyers Project – No one present to report.

- Maine State Bar Association/Lawyers in Libraries - 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 - No one present to report.
- Disability Rights Maine - No one present to report.

IX. Other Business:

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

Board:

February 24, 2026 - Portland (Feeney Conference Room)

October 26, 2026 - Portland (Feeney Conference Room)

[ALL MEETINGS at 3:00]

Executive Committee:

January 26, 2026 - Via Zoom

March 16, 2026 - Augusta (SJC Conference Room at CJC)

September 21, 2026 - Portland (SJC Conference Room, 3rd Floor, CCCH)

[ALL MEETINGS at 3:00]