

**Justice Action Group
JAG Executive Committee**

March 25, 2024 – 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES

In Person Participants: Hon. Andrew Mead, Ellen Gorman, Charlie Dingman, Jason Jabar

Via Zoom Participants: Magistrate Wolf, Judith Fletcher-Woodbury, Michelle Draeger, Chris Northrop, and Tom Fritzsche

Via Telephone Participants: None

I. Welcome/Introductions

II. Review of Minutes and Inventory. The Minutes of the September 18, 2023 Executive Committee meeting and the latest version of the Initiative Inventory were reviewed, approved, and made part of the JAG permanent record.

III. Report from Chair – J. Mead

- a. 2024 ATJ Day at the Legislature: Justice Mead and Charlie reported on the 2024 ATJ Day at the Legislature. The House and Senate enacted a resolution declaring the date to be Access to Justice Day at the Legislature; a copy of the Resolution was presented to Justice Mead. Representative Kuhn and Senator Carney both addressed their colleagues during sessions in their respective chambers and commended the work of Maine’s civil legal services providers.

Justice Mead spoke to three of the four caucuses.

- b. Update on MSBA Rural Access to Justice Task Force: The Task Force has completed its work and a report will be issued.
- c. Update on Task Force on Internationally Trained Lawyers: The Task Force has met and continues to explore opportunities for lawyers and judges from other countries to gain admission to the bar. A report and recommendation will be rendered in late summer.

- d. Providers' annual reports to JAG: Justice Mead confirmed the previous change from two to one single, annual report from providers to the Justice Action Group. The ACP and Charlie Dingman will explore the possibility of moving the annual reports to the Legislature from February 1 to a later date.
- e. Temporary Practice Authorizations: Justice Mead discussed a proposal to add a subsection (f) to Rule 11A of the Maine Bar Admission Rules that would add additional opportunities for prospective members of the bar to practice under the supervision of a member of the Maine Bar. The matter will be discussed at some point by the court. Justice Gorman inquired how such a rule would work in conjunction with Rule 89(c). The ACP will look further into that issue.

IV. Vice Chair's Report and Pro Bono Committee Report - Magistrate Judge Wolf: The pro bono committee met last week. Magistrate Wolf attended the MTLA annual meeting which included a pro bono informational program.

The Committee will be proposing a CLE credit for lawyers who engage in pro bono work.

An in-house counsel pro bono networking fair will take place at Pierce Atwood on May 16th. UNUM has been very helpful in pulling the event together.

Marsha Levy from the law school is now on the pro bono committee.

VLP is doing a pilot for small claims cases that will involve several law firms.

V. ACP Chair's Report - E. Gorman/ Rotating Representative: Justice Gorman reported on highlights from the last ACP meeting including details on how providers have been able to apply the recent increases in IOLTA funding. The providers have all been collaborating on an immigrant access screening tool that is currently being tested to allow for easier and swifter referrals for immigrants to the appropriate service providers.

Justice Gorman's report about the providers' discussion at the last ACP meeting included, among other examples, an update from Disability Rights

Maine, which is experiencing some staffing changes and is updating its website. Its Disability Awareness Day presentation coincided with ATJ Day. It turned out to be a blessing because the providers shared a table and spent time with each other during the low points of the day.

As an additional example, Legal Services for the Elderly is holding its first board alumni event by Zoom. It has been reaching out to former board members to issue the invitations and to catch up and they have been receiving a very warm reception on that.

On June 20th, LSE is cohosting an event with AARP talking about elder abuse issues in Bangor at the Gracie Theater at Husson University. There will be a keynote speaker.

VI. Justice Systems Committee Report – The committee submitted a comprehensive Report and Minutes of its January 24, 2024 meeting.

VII. Legislative Committee Report. – Charlie followed up on previous reporting on ATJ Day at the Legislature and briefed the group on ongoing efforts to bring the ATJ message to members of the Legislature and to reach out to leadership of key committees.

VIII. Executive Committee Organization Updates: [Service providers do not submit written reports to the Executive Committee. Some optional provider updates are provided orally during the Executive Committee meeting, either by the ACP Chair (above), or separately, as listed below.]

- Maine Justice Foundation: Michelle reported the annual income from IOLTA was the greatest ever. They surpassed 2.4 million in 2023. They have made supplemental distributions. MFJ is getting ready to roll out the Access to Justice Tax Credit process this spring and they have recently successfully transitioned the Campaign for Justice to the providers at Pine Tree and they are off and running.
- Maine Judicial Branch: No separate report.
- Volunteer Lawyers Project: No separate report.
- Maine Justice Foundation: No separate report.
- Maine State Bar Association/Lawyers in Libraries: No report given.

- Maine Trial Lawyers Association: Jason Jabar reported that the MTLA recently presented a session at the annual meeting. The attendees also heard from trial court Chiefs who talked about the backlog of cases and also the need for lawyers to take criminal defense cases.
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance: Tom Fritzsche reported on PTLA's recent growth and he hopes there will be more to announce soon. He thanked the Maine Justice Foundation for all the work on the Campaign for Justice and on the successful transition into the 2024 campaign as well, which is getting underway.
- Law School/Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic: Professor Northrup reported that the law school rural ATJ program has five matches which will be placed across Maine beyond Portland for the summer as funded by donors to the law school. The law school used their portion of the four-million dollar funding to hire a teaching fellow in civil advocacy.
- Legal Services for the Elderly: No separate report.
- Maine Equal Justice: No separate report.
- Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project: No separate report.

IX. Other Business: None

X. 2024/2025 JAG Executive Committee and Board meeting dates:

Board:

Oct. 15, 2024* – 3:00 – Portland – Mt. Washington Conf. Room

Feb. 25, 2025 – 3:00 – Portland – Feeney Conf. Room

Executive Committee:

July 1, 2024 – 3:00 – Portland – Feeney Conf. Room

Sept. 16, 2024 – 3:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room

Jan. 21, 2025 – 3:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room

* Please note: The October Board meeting had been scheduled for October 7. It is now October 15.