

**Justice Action Group  
JAG Executive Committee**

**March 13, 2023 – 2:00 p.m.**  
**Via Zoom**

**MINUTES**

**Participants:** Mead, J., Wolf, J., Judith Woodbury, Tom Fritzsche, Michelle Draeger, Charlie Dingman, Robyn Merrill, Stacy Stitham and Chris Northrup  
**By telephone:** None

- I. **Approval of Minutes** from November 14, 2022. No additions or corrections. They are accepted and made part of the permanent record.
- II. **Report from Chair – J. Mead:** Justice Mead reminded everyone of the ongoing initiatives as listed on the inventory and asked everyone to let us know if any additions or corrections need to be made.
  - a. Access to Justice Day at the Legislature: Has been reset for March 21, 2023. Justice Mead thanked Robyn Merrill for the updated provider list. This list will be given to the legislators for reference when they have constituents asking for help in legal matters.
  - b. MSBA Rural Access to Justice Task Force: Justice Mead noted the creation of the Maine State Bar Association’s Rural Access to Justice Task Force.
  - c. Regulatory reform/access to justice (see three documents attached) Justice Mead circulated three studies addressing efforts to reform legal practice to allow assistance and representation by non-lawyers to help assist in addressing the “justice gap” as reported by the Legal Services Corporation. The MSBA, MTLA, and Board of Overseers of the Bar are asked to review the materials and give the issue some thought for later discussion.
  - d. VLP pro bono fellowship program: Justice Mead reviewed the VLP pro bono fellowship program and reported on its present status. He described the objectives of the program as creating a well-prepared

cadre of lawyers who are committed to pro bono as part of their private practices. Eight educational sessions in seminar fashion take place during the one-year program culminating in a session and lunch with the SJC Justices in December. Magistrate Judge Wolf, Justice Alexander, and Justice Mead presented a program in February addressing appellate and federal practice in February appellate advocacy.

Justice Mead spoke about various initiatives focusing on rural practice, mentoring, and pro bono, all of which include CLE components. He questioned whether the initiatives could consolidate and coordinate their educational efforts for maximum effect and coverage. Perhaps a combined rural access roundtable discussion and focused CLE program could be a featured component of a professional organization meeting?

**III. Vice Chair's Report and Pro Bono Committee Report – J. Wolf:** Judge Wolf reported that she is pleased that Stacy and the MSBA have agreed to take over the lead for the Rural Access Task Force. They have sent letters to the major stakeholders such as the legal services providers, the law school, the Governor's office, the Board of Overseers, etc. asking them to put forth a delegate to work on this initiative. It is obviously going to be a year-long process but everyone is excited to work on it.

The Pro Bono Committee is working on a proposal for CLE credit for pro bono work. A draft has been presented to Aria Ee, but they have not heard back yet. Judge Wolf thinks it is a good way to secure more pro bono activity by private attorneys. This will be a lead issue at another roundtable to be held in May. The roundtable they held with mid-sized firms was very successful and they are hopeful this one will be too. They will move on to larger firms in the fall.

They are continuing to follow what is happening with the rural access clinics and will be having more discussions about whether there are ways to open more clinic opportunities or facilitate opportunities in courthouses. There is a need right this moment at the courthouses.

**IV. ACP Chair's Report – [Rotating Provider Representative]** See report below from Robyn Merrill under Maine Equal Justice.

**V. Justice Systems Committee Report** (1/25/23 minutes attached) – **Jaye Martin:** Jaye was not present. Justice Mead reported this group continues to meet with judicial branch representatives to share information and concerns. He reported that the court has created a working group called the Court Orientation and Public Education Committee (COPE) that is working on brochures, videos, and other resources to assist unrepresented parties in navigating the court system. He will explore the possibility of including representatives of this group in the periodic Justice Systems Committee meetings.

**VI. Legislative Committee Report – Charlie Dingman:** Charlie reported on planning for the rescheduled (March 21) Access to Justice Day at the Legislature. Justice Mead and Judge Wolf will meet with the four caucuses to discuss ATJ issues. Afterwards, Justice Mead will address the Judiciary Committee at 1:00. At 1:30 the Judiciary Committee will convene a hearing on the funding bill (LD 594).

**VII. Executive Committee Organization Updates:**

- **Maine Judicial Branch (Odyssey Update/ Justice Partners):** Justice Mead reported on efforts to move ahead on the development of the Odyssey CMS/e-filing system after consultation with BerryDunn and a revamping of the development governance.
- **Maine Justice Foundation:** Michelle Draeger reported that MJF is celebrating their 40th year in existence this year. MJF raised \$631,000 on the Campaign for Justice last year. Michelle also updated the group on its IOLTA processes. The ATJ tax credit program has been very successful and the MJF is getting ready for another application cycle.
- **Maine State Bar Association:** Stacy Stitham reported they are gearing up for the Summer Meeting and planning a number of wellness themed activities for general health and well-being.
- **Pine Tree Legal Assistance:** Tom Fritzsche reported PTLA employee numbers have just exceeded 80 for the first time, but with the uptick in numbers (particularly in landlord/tenant matters) their phones are ringing off the hook and more staff is needed.
- **Law School/Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic:** Chris Northrup reported the Fort Kent rural clinic is up and running and things are going well. The clinic is partnering with PTLA around some foreclosure defense matters. They have hired two student attorneys for the summer and

have hired seven other rural summer fellowship folks. He hopes that in-person meeting will return to the teen center program as the pandemic resolves.

- Maine Equal Justice: Robyn Merrill reported they are extremely busy both doing work to advance policy solutions to the Legislature and undertaking administrative advocacy.

**VIII: Other Business:** None

**IX: 2023 JAG Executive Committee and Board meeting dates:**

**JAG Board (Feeney Conference Room – Cumberland County Courthouse, Portland):**

June 20, 2023 – 3:00 – Portland – Feeney Conference Room  
Dec. 12, 2023 – 3:00 – Portland – Feeney Conference Room

**Executive Committee meeting dates (SJC Conf. Room – Capital Judicial Center, Augusta):**

May 15, 2023 – 2:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room  
Sept. 18, 2023 – 2:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room  
Nov. 13, 2023 – 2:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room

**Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.**