

Growing the Pie

“Cut my pie into four pieces, I don’t think I could eat eight.” – Yogi Berra

CONTRARY TO THE WISDOM OF YOGI Berra, the Philadelphia Bar Foundation ultimately aims to grow the pie. We must meet the challenge to significantly increase philanthropy for access to justice and legal aid in our region. The need is clear and greater than ever before:

- Philadelphia has the worst poverty rate of the largest U.S. cities.
- 28 percent of Philadelphians – more than 430,000 people – live below the federal poverty level.
- Only 1 in 5 low-income individuals and families in Philadelphia receive the civil legal assistance needed for crucial problems affecting their lives.
- The lack of access to justice often leads to lost opportunities for education, employment, housing, family unity, health care, safety and much more.

These barriers add up to ultimately compromise the ability of individuals to exercise their basic rights and fully participate in our economic and civic systems.

Charitable Giving is as American as Apple Pie . . .

Many individuals, law firms, corporate legal departments and others have certainly acted generously in assisting the Foundation over the years. Our donors know that the Foundation effectively supports the full range of nonprofit legal aid organizations, from education to employment, from health to housing, from youth to seniors and from people with disabilities to immigrants.

Philanthropy for legal aid through the Foundation is also valued because our 14 integrated programs and services – including grantmaking, technical assistance, fellowships, awards, and public awareness efforts – are successful in removing barriers to justice, engaging the legal community and building system-wide capacity for

By Thomas A. Brophy



the local legal aid and pro bono networks.

But Ensuring Everyone Gets a Slice of the Pie is Not Easy

As Philadelphia’s philanthropic hub for access to justice, the Foundation has a responsibility to move the community to a much higher level of funding for legal aid. Those of us with the ability to help have an obligation to get involved and ensure that all of our neighbors receive justice.

More than 35 nonprofit legal aid organizations receive critical support from the Foundation, totaling more than \$3 million in grants and other assistance in the last five years. Our annual grants range in size from more than \$100,000 to less than \$2,000. More than 60,000 individuals and families receive direct services each year from organizations funded by the Foundation, as well as tens of thousands more who benefit through impact litigation and advocacy.

But the status quo is not adequate. The capacity of legal aid in Philadelphia must grow to serve more people in need. Bar Foundation grants must increase in size to allow the full range of organizations to hire more staff. We must set ambitious goals, because doubling the overall funding would still only meet less than 40 percent of real client needs. In addition, the Foundation’s vital programs for training, technical assistance, fellowships, and public awareness must expand to sustain and strengthen the legal aid and pro bono systems.

Our New ‘Unified Approach’ to Fundraising is Practical, Not Pie in the Sky

I have dedicated much of my time over the last six months to conversations with steadfast supporters of the Foundation. I asked these individuals what the Foundation can do to make it easier for them and their offices to provide robust philanthropic commitments to this cause.

In response, I heard unreserved backing for the Foundation. The leaders of our legal community enthusiastically want to contribute their fair share. No hesitation or uncertainty.

I then tested a new idea for fundraising to reach these bold objectives. I asked whether major donors, law firms and businesses would respond to a “unified approach,” where the Foundation will make a single annual request for giving. Our intention for this new approach is to help our donors set an annual charitable budget regardless of the specific events and campaigns we hold during the year. Most importantly, the unified approach must lead to a substantial growth in funding.

Andrew R. “Drew” Duffy, Saltz Mongeluzzi Barrett & Bendesky PC, provided feedback similar to what I heard from many others. He said, “My firm is a long-standing supporter of the Bar Foundation and its crucial access to justice mission. We are happy to reinforce this support by making a comprehensive annual commitment.”

Vincent R. McGuinness, Jr., Cozen O’Connor, said, “Since our firm plans its philanthropy on an annual basis, it’s actually a huge help for us to have one conversation with the Bar Foundation and work out our charitable engagement without regard to the timing of their particular

events.”

Based on this kind of extraordinary support, the Foundation plans to move ahead with the new unified approach to fundraising. Later this year, we will contact major donors and ask for an annual commitment. We need your assistance to make this a streamlined and productive process for everyone. And we hope you will consider increasing your overall giving by at least 15 percent.

The unified approach will reduce the Foundation’s staff time involved with seeking donations and sponsorships at multiple points during the year. Our board members will focus on developing deeper and mutually beneficial relationships with our supporters. Annual giving commitments will also provide the Foundation with greater flexibility for our events, allowing us to restructure these gatherings to maximize revenue over costs for the benefit of our grant recipients. We will also experiment with new types of events to generate donations while growing public awareness and appreciation for legal aid and pro bono efforts.

On behalf of the board and staff of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation, thank you for your ongoing passion for ensuring access to justice for all people in the community, particularly those struggling with poverty, abuse and discrimination.

Check out our new and improved website and please test the Donate Now page at www.philabarfoundation.org.

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Federal Funding Cuts Announced

Many of the legal aid nonprofits supported by the Bar Foundation will be significantly affected by funding cuts included in the proposed federal budget for 2018. The initial budget was announced on March 15. The budget proposes to eliminate all funding for the Legal Services Corporation. Major cuts are also proposed to other federal programs affecting people struggling with poverty, housing, education, health care, and much more.

YOU CAN HELP NOW BY SUPPORTING THE BAR FOUNDATION!

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