



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Update on Free Legal Assistance Available for Disaster Victims *Partnership between Iowa State Bar Association, Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project and ABA YLD helps residents*

DES MOINES, IOWA, June 12, 2008 — A toll-free legal assistance line is available for the victims of recent disasters in Iowa. The service, which allows callers to request free help from a lawyer, is a partnership between The Iowa State Bar Association, Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project and the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division.

Victims facing legal issues who are in need of legal assistance may call **(877) 775-8882** at any time 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The line is staffed between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. central time Monday through Friday to request assistance. Messages can be left at any time. Callers should identify that they are seeking disaster-related legal assistance. Victims who qualify for assistance will be matched with Iowa lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal help.

The types of legal assistance available includes:

- Securing FEMA and other government benefits available to disaster victims
- Assistance with life, medical and property insurance claims
- Reviewing home repair contracts and contractors
- Replacing wills and other important legal documents destroyed in the disaster
- Advising on consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems
- Counseling on landlord/tenant problems

Background

When the U.S. President declares a major disaster, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for disaster victims to request legal assistance. Funding for the

toll-free line comes from the Department of Homeland Security under the authority of Section 415 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 100-707). The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division in turn partners with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteer lawyers in affected areas to handle victims' cases.

Victims should be aware that there are some limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (i.e., those cases where attorneys are paid part of the settlement by the court). Such cases are referred to the ISBA Lawyer Referral Service. To determine whether an issue qualifies for free legal assistance, individuals should call the **(877) 775-8882** number between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. central time Monday through Friday for more information.

Local Media Contacts

For more information about disaster legal aid, please contact:

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Partnership Members

The following organizations have joined forces to establish a toll-free phone line for Iowa storm victims to request free legal assistance, and to provide volunteer attorneys to handle cases arising from recent storm damage.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD) – The ABA YLD, the largest national organization of young lawyers, provides leadership in serving the public and the profession, and promoting excellence and fulfillment in the practice of law. Its parent organization, the ABA, is the national voice of the legal profession and the largest voluntary professional membership group in the world.

The Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA) – The Iowa State Bar Association is a voluntary organization of more than 7,900 lawyers and judges who are licensed to practice law in the state of Iowa. Oldest of the voluntary bar associations in the country, The ISBA has been in continuous operation since its founding in 1874. The Iowa State Bar Association is a vibrant, progressive organization that provides Iowa attorneys with the benefits of professional association with their colleagues. Its benefits include continuing legal education, practice aids, interaction with the judiciary and legislature, participation in reform of the law, and news regarding developments impacting the profession

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror. Through an agreement with the American Bar Association, FEMA underwrites the cost of operating toll free legal assistance lines for victims in areas designated as federal disaster sites.

Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (PCBA VLP) – The PCBA VLP provides access to justice for residents in Polk County. For nearly 25 years the project has provided civil legal assistance to low income citizens in need. The generous support of the attorneys in the community to

volunteer their time, made it possible to provide assistance to more than 1,300 clients last year. The PCBA VLP is assisting with the volunteer efforts on the hotline.

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