

CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES

Resolution 3

In Support of Voices for Civil Justice Communications Initiative for Civil Legal Aid

WHEREAS, access to justice is fundamental to the American system of government under law; and

WHEREAS, current levels of civil legal assistance in every state and territory are inadequate to address civil legal issues involving parental rights and basic human needs, such as shelter, sustenance, safety and health; and

WHEREAS, recent experience has taught that progress in addressing civil access to justice problems is greatly advanced by the innovations of courts, bar associations, and non-profit service providers, whose combined efforts to expand access come under the rubric of “civil legal aid”; and

WHEREAS, the Conference of Chief Justices has long championed such efforts to increase civil access to justice as described most recently in Resolution 13, Reaffirming Commitment to Access to Justice Leadership and Expressing Appreciation for Access to Justice Progress and Collaboration, adopted in 2013; and

WHEREAS, the Public Welfare Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the National Center for State Courts, and the American Bar Association, along with other national leaders in the effort to expand access to civil justice, have recently collaborated to launch a new communications initiative, referred to as Voices for Civil Justice, that will raise the public’s awareness and understanding of the vital role of civil legal aid in assuring fairness for all in the justice system; and

WHEREAS, the Voices for Civil Justice communications hub will be an important new resource in the effort to communicate with key audiences about the worsening crisis in funding for all such access services, as well as to relay the story of significant innovations in the field of civil legal aid, such as access to justice commissions, judicial leadership initiatives, self-help centers, web-based access to information and forms, court-based services, and expanded pro bono models; and

WHEREAS, the Conference has long recognized the importance of effective communications as an aid to public understanding of, and in ensuring the optimum functioning of, the courts;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference of Chief Justices:

1. Reaffirms support for the fundamental principle of access to justice for all in civil legal matters; and
2. Recognizes the Voices for Civil Justice communications hub as a much-needed new resource to raise public awareness and understanding of the vital role of civil legal aid in assuring fairness for all in the justice system; and
3. Commends the Public Welfare Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the National Center for State Courts, the American Bar Association, and other national leaders for their vision and commitment in creating the Voices for Civil Justice communications hub; and
4. Encourages its members to work with and take advantage of the opportunities the Voices for Civil Justice communications hub will present to advance their state's or territory's access to justice goals.

Adopted as proposed by the CCJ Access, Fairness and Public Trust Committee at the CCJ Midyear Meeting on January 29, 2014.