

**LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION
KATRINA CONFERENCE CALL NOTES
JANUARY 31, 2006**

Asian American Justice Center

Juliet Choi

- It may be helpful to try the FEMA 1-800# to get a Vietnamese speaking operator. They have had more success in actually getting connected to a Vietnamese translator.
- Has heard the in Plaquemines Parish, LA they are still in need of basic necessities. Part of the parish is not even accessible unless you are working with the Red Cross. She will be visiting there during the week of February 6-10th to attend an “unmet needs” community meeting and will report on this during the next call.

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- Scott Simpson is the attorney for FEMA in the McWaters case. His contact information is: (202) 514-3495, scott.simpson@usdoj.gov
- FEMA is currently putting off evictions for anyone who had registered for an authorization code by the cut-off date (January 30).
- If evacuees have not received an eligibility decision on temporary housing assistance by Jan. 30, 2006, and have obtained an authorization code by that date, FEMA will continue to pay for that hotel room with an authorization code through March 1, 2006, *or* two weeks after receiving eligibility determination, whichever is later. In every case, FEMA will fund the hotel or motel room for evacuees for two weeks *after* they have received a determination on their request for assistance from FEMA.
- Some hotels have an overbooking situation. They are not obligated to provide rooms for evacuees. Many hotels have registered guests who reserved the rooms currently occupied by evacuees.
- There has been a suggestion that hotels would house evacuees after Mardi gras.
- A judge is not going to force FEMA to find housing for evacuees, but this could be a cheaper option.
- The hearing on class certification is going to take place on February 22nd.

- In a permanent injunction they will be asking to convert the TRO to an injunction on the issue of requiring applicants for Temporary Housing Assistance to first apply for a SBA loan as well as shared household rule denials.
- FEMA employees on the ground are not aware of rule changes and are often denying people based on incorrect information.
- There is currently an 11,000 application backlog. They are asking that the court impose a time table so that the neediest citizens can get the help they need.
- They are currently looking for witnesses who have been denied by FEMA as a result of the shared household rule to provide testimony in the case.

Housing

Willie Abrams (LSC)

- Wondering if anyone has heard of agencies other than the VA who are offering housing for hurricane evacuees.
- Maybe closed military bases would be a good place to look for housing options.

Curt Decker-

- Has heard that cruise ships are getting ready to evict evacuees.

Juliet Choi

- HUD is a place to look for housing options for preexisting benefits recipients. The KD-HAP program is one such program (for evacuees who were homeless before Katrina)
- There is currently talk both locally and federally about a KD-HAP II program for evacuees who would be eligible for these housing benefits as a result of losses sustained from the Hurricanes.

National Disability Rights Network

Curt Decker: (202) 408-9514 ex. 107, Curt.decker@ndrn.org

- \$66 million from FEMA was given to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in order to build the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN), a nationwide platform to maximize client disaster readiness while minimizing duplicated efforts across disaster response agencies.
- The NDRN was selected as one of the 10 recipient organizations to receive \$5 million of this funding to help establish a national case management program. This is not a direct assistance program.
- People affected by the Hurricanes who need more services than case management can provide will be referred to more legal services related programs for help.
- They welcome any referrals for clients with disability issues.
- For more information go to <http://www.katrinaaidtoday.org/>

Student Hurricane Network

Anna Arceneaux: (917) 628-8521, arceneauxa@gmail.com

- This program is student run initiative for law students who volunteer to travel to affected legal aid programs in the Gulf Region.
- The Network previously worked with Mark Moreau and Rowena Jones' programs in Louisiana during the winter break and looks forward to expanding opportunities at LSC funded programs in TX, FL, TN, and AL during the 2006 spring break season.
- Please go to www.studenthurricane.org for more information and updates
- The Network is currently expanding and recruiting new volunteers.
- The volunteers are most interested in traveling to New Orleans and the Gulfport areas.
- They are currently doing outreach at local universities in the Gulf Region in order to establish longer-term internship possibilities for local students.
- They are very eager to get information from additional programs on volunteer opportunities, but at this time they cannot guarantee any number of placements.
- If anyone has any research projects for law students to work on remotely, please contact Anna.

Alabama

Jimmy Fry

- He is currently working with the Presbyterian Relief Agency in Bayou La Batre, AL providing legal services for mainly Vietnamese evacuees. There are also Thai and Laotian evacuees in the area.
- They are currently trying to get information through interpreters, but have had problems with this method.
- They want to help and not hinder these evacuees, and in a few weeks they will be staffing a few new attorneys to help.
- Jimmy will get in touch with Juliet Choi at the Asian American Justice Center in order to discuss opportunities for Vietnamese speaking attorneys that she may have contact with.
- The State Bar call center is going to be shutting down and all calls will be referred to their call centers, which are up and running.

Louisiana

Mark Moreau

- The Louisiana Supreme Court order that allows for out-of-state attorneys to practice in Louisiana limits their practice to LSC program restrictions.
- There have been labor law violations cases. Many people are against the large number of Hispanic workers that are now in New Orleans as a result of the clean-up. They are not able to be helped by the LSC programs because of the eligibility restrictions.
- The Supreme Court order allows the out-of-state attorneys to practice only at LSC programs with the exception of one smaller non-LSC program in Lake Charles,

LA. Although this is a non-LSC program, the pro bono order states that “the legal services to be provided pursuant to this rule shall consist exclusively of the representation of clients who meet the financial eligibility and case type restrictions promulgated by the federal Legal Services Corporation.”

- They are currently trying to involve private attorneys and a housing advocacy group in order to take on the many FEMA trailer issues they are encountering.

Rowena Jones

- They are currently seeing unpaid wage claims, unemployment issues, and housing issues in their office.

Texas

Candra Stewart

- Has been able to sit down with the Dallas Housing Authority in order to discuss the issues that many evacuees are facing with the unpaid rent situation in the area.
- They were able to get the Housing Authority to agree to help the clients whose names they had on a list they created based on calls and walk-ins to their office.
- There are some landlords who did not sign contracts with the Housing Authority. Candra’s office has been trying to contact them in order to get them to sign these contracts so that they can at least get paid the rent they are owed for December and January.
- As of now, no one has gotten back to their office about the possibility of VA Housing for Hurricane evacuees. The houses that are available had been foreclosed on but evacuees now have 30 days to apply for these homes before they are placed back on the market. If approved, this is an 18 month housing situation.

ABA

Tony Barash

- They are working with a few national law firms in order to put together an advisory group on retirement and pension benefits. The ABA tax section is also involved.
- They are currently engaged in statewide coordinating in Louisiana and Mississippi for the out-of-state lawyers who will be coming in as a result of the Supreme Court ruling.

NLADA

Don Saunders

- Paul Furrh had said that he had registered 4,000 requests for assistance at his program (Loan Star Legal Aid). Would it be possible for other programs to find out specific case numbers that might be of use to Congress in helping to get additional funding for legal services programs?

- Mark Moreau mentioned that they have not been keeping a case count, but he knows one attorney receives 40 calls per day from evacuees. One DRC is seeing 30 cases per day and another DRC in Louisiana is seeing around 20 cases per day.
- Howard Godnick mentioned that he receives statistics from FEMA twice per month on the number of applications filed rental assistance as of December 19, 2005. There are currently 11,284 pending cases, and 1,300 FEMA employees reviewing cases. 39,059 cases have been denied thus far. Taylor Healy will send out these statistics to the group.

Florida

Jose Fons (update sent to Taylor via e-mail on 1/31/06)

- In Delray Beach a public housing project was destroyed by Hurricane Wilma — the local public housing authority had scheduled the project for demolition and has been dragging their feet in securing new housing for the tenants — local legal services advocates are working to ensure that residents have a right to return and that a sufficient number of affordable housing units are rebuilt.
- In Palm Beach County they are starting to see contractor problems and condo association problems. Some condo associations are unsophisticated/inexperienced with contracting and insurance matters and have been defrauded. In other cases, low-income condo owners are being charged high assessment fees to cover the costs of the repairs even if they can't live in the condo due to the damage.
- At LSGMI they continue to see walk-in clients with FEMA assistance denials and people who need help with appeal letters. Today (January 31) is the deadline to apply for FEMA assistance and the local Disaster Recovery Centers have closed.

The next conference call is set for / Tuesday, February 14, 2006 @ 5:00pm
Instruction below to activate your conference call:

1. Everyone dials the IDT connect access number at the scheduled time: 1-(866) 266-3378
2. Everyone enters this conference ID number: 202-295-1502#
An automated system will answer and prompt parties to enter their password, followed by the # sign.
3. The *Host/Leader* enters his/her password: LSC996#
4. **Participants enter his/her password: 2266#**
5. Once a person leaves the conference call, an automated system will announce the participant has left.