



Give Help

As I write, two terrible natural disasters have hit states within driving range of Tennessee. Thousands are in need; those needs include legal needs; you can help; and it's never been easier.

Clichés are clichés because they're often true. Think "Volunteers." Many years ago now, while on an American Bar Association (ABA) trip to Texas, I took a free afternoon to visit the storied Alamo,

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strangely now set in the midst of downtown San Antonio. We Memphians sometimes have only a loose identification with our home state, and I was unprepared for the emotional experience of touring the shrine of Texas liberty and seeing the many names of Tennesseans carved in the stone of the interior wall. Volunteers all, they died defending Texas freedom.

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, though, Tennessee lawyers can provide meaningful help to Texans in real need without risking their lives. In fact, no Tennessee lawyer even needs to leave his couch.

Thanks to innovative and enterprising Tennesseans — and *Memphians*, actually — ABAFreeLegalAnswers.org has been adapted to allow Tennessee lawyers from Memphis to Mountain City to answer legal questions of Texas victims of Hurricane Harvey pro bono.

What is ABAFreeLegalAnswers.org?

It's an online platform where lawyers can volunteer to answer less complex legal questions from those in need. A lawyer signs up to volunteer and can review and answer questions submitted by individuals in need of pro bono legal help in the lawyer's jurisdiction. The program is modeled on walk-in legal clinics, but with FreeLegalAnswers.org, everything happens online. Those in need can just sign up, sign in and get help.

Former Tennessee Bar Association

President (and now chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service) Buck Lewis conceived the site, and his law firm, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz PC, did the coding and legal work pro bono. The ABA adopted the promising site and, *voilà*, ABAFreeLegalAnswers.org. Thanks to Buck's and the ABA's evangelization, the site has now been adopted all over: it's up and running in 42 states and the Virgin Islands.

And here's the coolest wrinkle. Thanks to innovative thinking and an emergency order by the Texas Supreme Court, lawyers outside Texas are now fully authorized to render pro bono help to Texas storm victims without worrying about unauthorized practice, even if they give that legal help from their couch in Kingsport using the Texas version of the site at Texas.FreeLegalAnswers.org. Not to take anything away from the dire needs involved here, but *how cool is that?*

Our own Chief Justice Jeff Bivins was instrumental in working with his Texas counterpart to help make this possible. And it's not just Tennessee lawyers who can help this way — so can your lawyer friends and family in other states as well.

So, if you want to help a Texan needing legal help after Hurricane Harvey, visit Texas.FreeLegalAnswers.org, sign up, sign in and help.

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Remember Others

Of course, don't forget victims of Hurricane Irma all over Florida and in Georgia, South Carolina and the Virgin Islands. For pro bono opportunities to help victims of both hurricanes, see the box below or visit the TBA website

How Lawyers Can Help with Hurricane Relief

- The Tennessee Bar Association, through its **Access to Justice Committee and Young Lawyers Division**, is providing outreach and support for pro bono legal services and financial assistance for victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma: www.tba.org/node/94433.

- **ABA Disaster Relief and ABA Young Lawyers Division:** Information for disaster survivors, updates on pro bono opportunities and ways to donate to organizations seeking financial contributions: www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/disaster_legal_services.html

- **Texas Free Legal Answers:** Tennessee attorneys can volunteer with Texas.FreeLegalAnswers.org, now updated to permit attorneys licensed outside of Texas, to participate.

- The **Texas Access to Justice Foundation** (www.teajf.org), the **Texas Bar Foundation** (www.txbf.org) and **Florida Bar Foundation** (www.thefloridabarfoundation.org) have established Hurricane Legal Aid Funds, with 100 percent of donations going directly to civil legal aid organizations providing support to hurricane survivors.

today. We'll keep updating these resources online, as needs and opportunities to help change. And even while we worry about storm victims, don't forget our fellow Tennesseans who still have legal needs every day. After all, October is "Celebrate Pro Bono Month." There are lots of opportunities for pro bono no matter where you are in Tennessee.

Get involved in some of the activities listed at www.tba.org/info/celebrate-pro-bono-month-2017. Also, read more about it on page 26.

Act today.

Give help. 

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Thumbs Up for Lincoln Book Review

I enjoyed John P. Williams' book review of *Lincoln's Greatest Case: The River, the Bridge, and the Making of America* (by Brian McGinty; review published in the September 2017 *Tennessee Bar Journal*).

I have read somewhere that in the closing argument for the defense, Lincoln asked the question,

"Gentlemen, the question in this lawsuit is whether a man has a greater right to go up and down this river, than he does to cross it."

— John B. Waters Jr., Sevierville,
Tennessee Bar Association
President, 1983-84

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