2023-2024
YEAR IN REVIEW



HVL

HOUSTON VOLUNTEER LAWYERS

A SERVICE OF THE HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION

A MESSAGE FROM THE 2023-2024 CHAIR



As I reflect on my service as the Chair of the 2023-2024 Board of Directors for Houston Volunteer Lawyers, I am proud of the work that was accomplished and the advancement of our mission to provide equal access to justice for all.

Overall, HVL provided legal assistance to more than 5,300 clients. This includes thousands of hours of pro bono hours provided by 1,009 private attorneys who volunteered their time and expertise to provide legal advice to 88% of these clients and extended representation to the rest. Legal issues included landlord/tenant concerns, estate planning, guardianship, expungement and record sealing, probate, and more. HVL continued to serve our veterans with volunteer attorneys meeting every Friday at the VA Hospital to provide in-person legal assistance.

And, with funds provided by the Equal Justice Works Foundation, HVL hired a full-time immigration attorney in late 2023 who hit the ground running. New community partnerships were created, and three naturalization clinics were hosted within the first half of 2024 with more planned going forward.

As I began my year as Chair, I hoped more attorneys would make time to support HVL and dedicate time during the year to volunteer. I want to thank the seven firms who hosted New Associate Boot Camps in the fall. This outward demonstration to new attorneys of making pro bono service an important part of a legal career set a wonderful tone to so many young attorneys who were just getting started.

Another example of the importance of pro bono volunteerism are the eight firms who worked with HVL to create projects for their summer associates. Many of these summer projects allowed the two- and three-year students who may have been working in a law environment for the first time to work with an experienced attorney at the firm on meaningful work that helped advance equal access to justice.

HVL was excited to establish a new Medical-Legal Partnership with AccessHealth, a federally qualified healthcare provider that serves clients in Fort Bend and Waller Counties. Extending HVL's presence into the counties surrounding Harris County broadens our reach to more clients and includes volunteer opportunities for attorneys who practice outside of Houston.

The merger of the Houston Bar Association's Legal Hotline into HVL's Legal Advice Clinics capped off many months of planning and coordination. The newly created HBA LegalLine Powered by HVL and Consejos Legales expanded the provision of legal advice to additional days and hours during the week, better serving both the clients and the volunteer attorneys.

The year flew by as the HVL Board and staff, joined by hundreds of volunteers, worked tirelessly to meet the challenge of bridging the legal gap that exists for thousands of our low-income neighbors. Thank you for the opportunity to lead this organization as together, we did the work to provide equal access to justice for all.

Greg Moore
Board Chair, 2023-2024
Houston Volunteer Lawyers

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



My first year as Executive Director of Houston Volunteer Lawyers was filled with meeting new people – staff, Board Members, attorney volunteers, community partners, clients, and funders. With everyone working together, HVL grew to serve more clients, to offer additional legal services, to build new community partnerships, to involve more attorneys, and to receive financial support from new funders, all while maintaining strong relationships with those who have been a part of HVL for years.

With the groundwork laid as the year began, the theme of the 23-24 year was to "Dig In and Get to Work". Internally, the HVL staff was reorganized so that the needs of the community were matched with the volunteer spirit of our pro bono attorneys. The weekly Veterans Legal Clinics drew more and more veterans to the VA Hospital on Friday afternoons seeking legal assistance and the number of attorneys who volunteered every Friday afternoon kept pace.

HVL built upon the partnership with the Houston Public Defender's Office to continue to provide legal assistance for graduates of the Fresh Start program to expunge and seal past criminal records to remove barriers faced by those who had paid their debt to society.

New partnerships were created with community partners including Community Family Centers as HVL rolled out legal assistance for those eligible for naturalization to become U.S. citizens. Supporting this entry into immigration assistance were the Equal Access to Justice Foundation and Houston Endowment that provided the funding necessary to implement this new program. HVL was also thrilled to partner with AccessHealth, a federally qualified healthcare provider, to create a Medical-Legal Partnership for clients in Fort Bend and Waller counties. By committing to the expanded geographic area served by HVL, we reached more clients and offered volunteer opportunities for additional attorneys who primarily practice in those jurisdictions.

On a personal note, I want to thank the Board of Directors and staff for stepping in as my family grew when my second son was born in October. A special thanks to Greg Moore, the Board Chair, and the four directors at HVL, all of whom kept the pace steady while I was out on parental leave.

Upon my return, the new immigration attorney had been hired and had already set dates for the 2024 naturalization clinics at which dozens of lawful permanent residents received assistance in completing their applications for citizenships. HVL plans to assist 200 individuals apply for and become citizens of the United States before the end of 2024.

The momentum continues as the 23-24 Board of Directors ended their terms of office. I thank all those who were a part of the success of the 23-24 year and invite you to join us, if you aren't already working with HVL, as we continue to develop programs that will reach more clients in our vision to provide equal access to justice for all.

Jessica Howton Stool
Executive Director
Houston Volunteer Lawyers

2023-2024
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
Greg Moore

Chair-Elect
Collin J. Cox

Treasurer
Robert Painter

Secretary
M. Kaylan Dunn

Immediate Past Chair
David Harrell

Directors, Term 2022-2024
Emma Doineau
Jamie Leader
Peter Lowy
Cassandra McGarvey
Aaron Reimer
Andrew Yeh

Directors, Term 2023 - 2025
Jacqueline Furlow
Audrey Momanaee
Terry W. Roberson
Tramaine Chargois Singleton
Jeff Oldham
Scott Ellis

Ex-Officio
Houston Bar Association
President
Diana Gomez

Houston Bar Foundation
Chair
Monica Karuturi

Houston Young Lawyers Association
Brooksie Boutet

Houston Bar Association
Mindy Davidson

Judicial Representative
Hon. Jerry Simoneaux

HOUSTON VOLUNTEER LAWYERS STAFF 2023-2024



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jessica Howton Stool

STAFF ATTORNEYS
Natasha Bahri
Staff Attorney

Barbara "Bobbie" Cochran
Staff Attorney

Emma Bykerk
Hunton Andrews Kurth Fellow

Maricarmen Dollar
Supervising Attorney

Kristen Franco
Staff Attorney

Joyce Helfman
Managing Attorney

Johnnay Holt
AWA Fellow

Andrew Lehmann
Supervising Attorney

Luz Martinez Brennan
Staff Attorney and Data Analyst

Iris Onassis
Staff Attorney

Blenda Ruiz
Staff Attorney

Stephanie Sommerlatte
Supervising Attorney

Susan Soto
Staff Attorney

Michelle Tewal
Staff Attorney

Elizabeth Tran
Legal Services Director

Barbara Urdiales
Staff Attorney

Jessica Zarate
Equal Justice Works Fellow

PRO BONO
Brittany Krohn
Pro Bono Director

May Murdoch
Pro Bono Coordinator

Leilani Ortiz
Program Coordinator

LEGAL PROFESSIONALS
Yamilex Aguirre
Program Coordinator

Caylee Bock
Program Coordinator

Angeles Calderon
Intake Manager

Natalie Garcia
Case Worker

Deon Hunter
Program Assistant

Jacqueline Lopez
Case Worker

Gabrielle McKeller
Program Coordinator

Natalia Reyes
Lead Program Coordinator

Sibeles "Felix" Torres
Case Worker

ADMINISTRATION
Marilyn Brown
Director of Grants & Special Projects

Yaroslav Diaz
IT Junior Administrator

Thao Dong
Senior Staff Accountant

Thao Nguyen
Staff Accountant

Laura Lopez
Part-Time Receptionist

BRIDGING *the legal gap*

The mission of Houston Volunteer Lawyers is to promote **access to justice** for individuals in the Houston area by assisting those who cannot afford legal representation in **civil matters.**

What does it mean to have equal **access to justice** for all?

At HVL, we believe that the ability to afford an attorney should **NOT** determine who has access to justice. There is **NO** constitutional right to an attorney in civil matters, leaving multitudes of our neighbors on their own when facing civil legal issues. Trying to navigate the legal system on your own can be incredibly challenging.

And Civil Matters Matter

Civil laws exist to secure and protect basic needs, including housing, education, healthcare, income, and safety. These are the areas of the law that most of us will encounter at some point in our lives. Having an attorney on your side when dealing with civil matters makes a huge difference.



ADVANCING *our mission*

Connecting those in need of legal assistance with volunteer lawyers

Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, more than 5,000 individuals received free legal assistance thanks to 1,000 private attorneys who donated their time and shared their legal expertise. In total, these pro bono attorneys provided advice and counsel to 4,500+ individuals and represented another 700+ in their legal matters. And, the volunteer attorney often received as much as or more than they gave.

> "I think I helped my client by helping him understand his legal options and validating his instinct that there may have been legal wrongs performed against him. I think my client has impacted my life by affirming my desire to aid those who lack access to legal resources, ensuring they are not exploited."
>
> S. Diana Oladetimi
> Welcome Home Justice LLC

> "It was an honor to work with my client. In a very difficult situation, she always maintained a positive attitude, and she was excited and willing to tackle any challenges. It was hard to see such a nice person be so unfairly treated, and even more so, be unable to navigate confusing legal terrain and non-responsive parties while trying to ensure she was treated fairly. Being able to simplify that process for her, while also pursuing needed legal remedies felt like very important work."
>
> Matthew Goldstein, Associate
> Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

All quotes have been edited for length and clarity..

ADVANCING *our mission*

Inspiring, supporting, and empowering lawyers to volunteer their services

In the fall of 2023, HVL introduced a Boot Camp for new associates who joined various law firms. Seven firms hosted these Boot Camps, which provided an excellent opportunity for Senior Partners to emphasize the importance of maintaining a pro bono component throughout their legal careers. A total of seventy-one new associates participated, each taking on their first pro bono case.

> This is the first matter I have handled for a client through the HVL via the Veterans Clinic, and it encourages me to continue to provide such assistance to our Veterans as I am able.
>
> Michael Grove
> Attorney at Law

> The client's family was afforded peace of mind knowing that the properties would officially belong to the right family members as their deceased loved one had intended. The three attorneys working on this case gained valuable experience with and knowledge of the probate system.
>
> Kyle Clendenon, Iris Hill Crabtree, and
> To Nhu Huynh, Associate Attorneys
> Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

All quotes have been edited for length and clarity..

ADVANCING *our mission*

Working in the community through strategic partnerships to provide legal information, education, and support

In the greater Houston area, there are hundreds of thousands of individuals who will face at least one civil legal issue each year and will not have the funds to hire an attorney. Finding those individuals, informing them of HVL's services, and developing the level of trust necessary for legal assistance to be beneficial depends on building and maintaining strategic relationships with community partners that provide other vital services to these same individuals.

In 2023 -2024, HVL continued to partner with Memorial Assistance Ministries, BakerRipley Neighborhood Centers, Texas Children's Hospital, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Dress for Success, South Texas College of Law, University of Houston Law Center, Thurgood Marshall Law School, the City of Houston, Harris County Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Communities in Schools, and Spring Branch Family Development Center.

HVL also added some new community organizations as strategic partners in 2023-2024. AccessHealth joined HVL in a Medical-Legal Partnership serving the residents of Fort Bend and Waller Counties. Community Family Centers stepped up in a big way to partner with HVL to offer legal assistance for naturalization applications for their clients including providing community members who had graduated from a Spanish interpretation class. HVL is also thrilled to be working with the Harris County Probate Courts, HISD's Sunrise Centers, Bear Creek Masjid, Mi Familia en Accion, Engage, Third Ward Multiservice Center, and Sunnyside Multiservice Center.

PRO BONO ATTORNEYS *matter*

HVL is the largest provider of pro bono legal services in Texas. Maintaining a pro bono model of service delivery requires a balance of clients who need assistance with a variety of legal issues that match the capacity of private attorneys who find time to volunteer their legal expertise often in areas of the law that are other than what their daily practice involves.

Private attorneys who make time in their schedules to assist HVL clients who otherwise would not have access to an attorney are local heroes. HVL encourages attorneys to volunteer, supports each attorney when needed, and monitors the progress of each case.

Recruit More Boots Challenge

In 2024, HVL introduced the Sales *Recruit More Boots Challenge*. James B. Sales initiated and founded HVL over 40 years ago. He was often heard saying, "We need more boots on the ground" in the fight to provide low-income Texas with access to legal representation. Mr. Sales died in 2023, but his spirit will live on each year as HVL hosts the *Recruit More Boots Challenge*. HVL thanks the thirty attorneys who participated in the inaugural *Recruit More Boots Challenge.*

Pro Bono Coordinators Toolkit

Some of the unsung heroes of providing pro bono legal assistance to clients are the Pro Bono Coordinators who work at law firms and serve as the HVL contacts, cheerleaders, pro bono promoters, and more. To support their efforts to encourage their colleagues to volunteer, HVL introduced the Pro Bono Coordinators Toolkit. Ready to use email blasts, pro bono month celebrations, pro bono opportunities, and more are just a click away for the busy Pro Bono Coordinator.

Nurturing the Next Generation of Advocates

Introducing Pro Bono volunteerism to law students and new attorneys is a way to encourage those just starting out on their legal career path to make sure to make time for pro bono service throughout their careers.

New Associate Boot Camps – We sincerely thank the law firms that participated in our inaugural New Associate Boot Camp, where 100% of their new associates took on their first pro bono cases. Firms with full participation include Bracewell LLP, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, Haynes & Boone, Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, Locke Lord LLP, Vinson & Elkins, and Norton Rose Fulbright.

Summer Associate Projects – Eight firms included a pro bono project as a part of the summer associate classes. HVL thanks Mayer Brown, Porter Hedges, King & Spalding, Simpson Thacher, Kirkland & Ellis, Gray Reed, Haynes and Boone, and Morgan Lewis for sponsoring a summer associate project in 2024.



New Associate Boot Camp kick-off CLE at Vinson & Elkins in October 2023.

EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE CHAMPIONS

In 2023-2024, 65 law firms, corporate law departments, and solo practitioners agreed to take one pro bono case for every 5 attorneys in their Houston office. Collectively, this group provided legal representation to 545 clients. We thank each firm, law department, and solo practitioner who rose to the top and met this challenge.

CORPORATE LEGAL DEPARTMENTS

Baker Hughes
CenterPoint Energy, Inc.
Chevron U.S.A. Inc.*
Exxon Mobil Corporation
Halliburton Energy**
LyondellBasell Industries**
Shell Oil Company*

LARGE LAW FIRMS

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP*
Baker Botts L.L.P.*
BakerHostetler LLP
Blank Rome LLP**
Bracewell LLP*
Chamberlain Hrdlicka
Dentons US LLP
Evershed Sutherland US LLP
Foley Lardner*
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP*
Gray Reed
Greenberg Traurig, LLP
Haynes and Boone, LLP**
Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP*
Jackson Walker LLP*
King & Spalding LLP
Kirkland & Ellis LLP*
Locke Lord LLP*
Morgan Lewis**
Norton Rose Fulbright*
O'Melveny & Myers LLP**
ReedSmith LLP
Sidley Austin*
Squire Patton Boggs
Vinson & Elkins LLP*
Winstead PC
Winston & Strawn LLP*
Yetter Coleman LLP*

MID-SIZE LAW FIRMS

McDowell & Hetherington LLP

BOUTIQUE LAW FIRMS

Beck Redden LLP*
Gibbs & Bruns LLP
Royston, Razor, Vickery & Williams, L.L.P.
Weycer, Kaplan, Pulaski & Zuber, P.C.
Wilson, Cribbs, & Goren, P.C.

SMALL LAW FIRMS

Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Agosto, Aziz & Stogner
Coane & Associates
Jenkins & Kamin, LLP
Painter Law Firm PLLC
Shipley Snell Montgomery LLP
Sorrels Law

SOLO LAW FIRMS AND PRACTITIONERS

Angela Solice, Attorney at Law
Archie Law PLLC
Elizabeth S. Pagel, PLLC**
Fleurinord Law PLLC
Fuqua & Associates, PC
Hasley Scarano L.L.P.
Law Office of Cindi L. Rickman
Law Office of Norma Levine Trusch
Law Office of Robert E. Price
Law Offices of Omonzusi Imobioh
Limbaga Law**
Martin R.G. Marasigan Law Offices**
McGarvey PLLC**
Northum Law
Sanchez Law Firm
Shortt & Nguyen, P.C.**
The Ericksen Law Firm
The Jurek Law Group, PLLC

***A special thanks to those firms who exceeded their pledge.**
**** Eleven Equal Access to Justice Champions more than doubled their pledge.**

PRO BONO *legends*



We proudly spotlight the exceptional pro bono attorneys whose unwavering commitment and dedication have made a profound impact on our community. These remarkable individuals have gone above and beyond, providing invaluable legal support to those in need and embodying the spirit of service. Join us in recognizing and celebrating their outstanding contributions, as we honor the passion and perseverance that define our pro bono legends!



"MOST LIKELY TO RECRUIT A FULL ROSTER OF ATTORNEYS"
***Emily Sullivan,* Kirkland & Ellis**



"MOST LIKELY TO BE YOUR GO-TO FAMILY LAW EXPERT"
Jennifer A. Broussard, The Law Office of Jennifer A. Broussard



"MOST LIKELY TO WIN A CASE A WEEK BEFORE MATERNITY LEAVE"
Katie Caminati, Shell



"MOST LIKELY TO DIVE IN AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE"
Shay Johanson, Attorney at Law







"MOST LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER AT EVERY LEGALLINE"
Emily Mott, BakerHostetler
Vickie Wang,Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati
Tyler Self, Locke Lord



"MOST LIKELY TO TRY A NEW AREA OF LAW"
Sarah Smati, Vinson & Elkins LLP



"MOST LIKELY TO TIDY UP AND TRANSFER TITLES"
Drew Weitzel, Weycer, Kaplan, Pulaski & Zuber, P.C.



"MOST LIKELY TO JUGGLE MULTIPLE PRO BONO CASES AT ONCE"
Aaron Ackerman, Law Office of Aaron Ackerman, PLLC dba Ackerman Immigration Law





"MOST LIKELY TO HELP SOMEONE BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN"
Juliana Shaw, Blank Rome
Avery Welker, Morgan Lewis

CLIENTS *matter*

National statistics report that "75% of low-income households in America experienced one civil legal problem in the study year. And, that 55% of those report that the civil legal problem substantially impacted their lives – with the consequences affecting their finances, mental health, physical health and safety, and relationships."

The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans, Legal Services Corporation, 2022.

In the greater Houston area, this means that 800,000+ residents face a civil legal matter each year. Most will be on their own to navigate the justice system and will face numerous barriers in their attempts to receive equal access to justice.

Houston Volunteer Lawyers along with hundreds of pro bono attorneys work each day to offer innovative ways to help meet as many of these needs as possible.

> Having her name misspelled on her birth certificate has been a huge obstacle for the client in life. Helping her get this fixed will make it easier to get legal documents that correctly reflect her name.
>
> Katie Harrington, Partner
> Foley & Lardner LLP

> I believed it relieved the client of a financial debt that he wouldn't have been able to pay off and would have resulted in more serious problems with the Internal Revenue Service.
>
> Joseph C. Denker, Associate
> Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP

> The client has been living in a car for the past couple of years. She has also been turned down from employment opportunities once the employer found out about the charge. My hope is that with this case being sealed, she will have more housing and employment opportunites.
>
> Emma Bykerk
> Hunton Andrews Kurth

All quotes have been edited for length and clarity..

CLIENTS *matter*

HBA LegalLine Powered by HVL

A merger between HBA's LegalLine and HVL was completed this year. The result is that clients now have additional days and hours during which they may receive legal advice and counsel from a pro bono attorney. Additionally, Spanish speaking attorneys offer Consejos Legales once a month for those clients who speak Spanish.

Naturalization

HVL was awarded funding by the Equal Justice Works Foundation and Houston Endowment to add legal assistance for eligible lawful permanent residents to apply for citizenship through naturalization. Pro bono attorneys stepped up to assist, new community partners joined this effort, and dozens of clients attended Saturday clinics to receive legal assistance.



HVL client attends her Oath Ceremony in 2024.



HVL attorney Jessica Zarate, along with pro bono attorney Charles M. Rosson from Gibbs & Bruns LLP, attended their client's Oath Ceremony.

> "I helped my client complete her naturalization application. I am just so happy that I could help. The applicant would make a wonderful U.S. citizen."
>
> Kendall Burns,
> Kirkland & Ellis

All quotes have been edited for length and clarity..

FUNDING PARTNERS *matter*

Appearing before Congress, Legal Services Corporation President Ronald S. Flagg, noted that *"the current federal appropriation for legal aid is far less than the $700 million a year that Americans annually spend on Halloween costumes……for their pets."*

Even with the generous in-kind donations of the time and expertise of the hundreds of private attorneys who provide pro bono legal services, funding partners are critical to HVL's ability to continue this work. HVL appreciates the generous grants and gifts received from government, local foundations, corporations, law firms, the Houston Bar Foundation, and others.

Medical-Legal Partnership Launched in 2024

AccessHealth, a federally qualified healthcare provider, contracted with HVL to work collaboratively with the health care clinics to identify and assist patients with legal issues that cause or exacerbate their medical needs. An HVL staff attorney is available for patients at any of the 4 AccessHealth clinics in Fort Bend and Waller counties.



AccessHealth Medical-Legal Partnership Mixer at Lit Bookbar in Richmond, TX on Sep. 5.



AccessHealth Back to School Fair on Aug 10.

accesshealth



HVL staff supporting our very own green alien, Marilyn Brown.

Night Court

For many years, HVL has been a recipient of the funds raised by the annual Night Court show – an original musical comedy produced by a cast of attorneys in the Houston area. The 2023 Night Court show – The Law Files – resulted in a generous donation and included an HVL attorney in the cast.

Joining Forces to Offer Immigration Services

After a thorough study of the immigration needs best matched to Houston Volunteer Lawyers' pro bono model of service, funding was sought to begin offering legal assistance for naturalization applications. HVL thanks Equal Justice Works, Houston Endowment, and the Give Citizenship a Boost fund from the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative for joining forces to provide the funding necessary to add this area of legal assistance to the menu of services provided to eligible area residents.

Houston Endowment

HILSC

EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS

FUNDING PARTNERS *matter*

HVL welcomes our new funders who join the growing list of donors that contribute the critical funding needed to provide the core services offered by HVL each year. HVL is incredibly grateful to these funders that provided $5,000 or more in financial support to fund HVL's work in 2023.

NON-GOVERNMENT

Association of Women Attorneys

Night Court

Houston Bar Foundation

Houston Bar Foundation Military & Veterans Committee

Houston Endowment

Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative, Give Citizenship a Boost

King & Spalding

Kirkland & Ellis

Legal Services Corporation Funds subgrant by Lone Star Legal Aid

Texas Access to Justice Foundation

Texas Children's Hospital

We also want to thank the many law firms and corporations that contributed to The Harvest Celebration. This annual event is hosted by the Houston Bar Association and Houston Bar Foundation to raise funds to support HVL.

GOVERNMENT

Internal Revenue Service, Low Income Taxpayer Clinic

Texas Veterans Commission - *Fund for Veterans' Assistance*

IN-KIND

Hunton Andrews Kurth

Pro Bono - HVL appreciates the hundreds of area attorneys and non-attorneys who donate their time, expertise, and experience to provide equal justice to all. Pro Bono legal services were valued at more than $14 million in 2023.

A MESSAGE FROM THE 2023-2024 HOUSTON BAR FOUNDATION CHAIR



The Houston Bar Foundation was established in 1982 as the charitable arm of the Houston Bar Association. HBF's mission is to support programs that help provide legal representation to the indigent, promote community understanding of our legal system, and foster the administration of justice.

Through the generosity of our contributors and supporters of the annual Harvest Celebration hosted by the Houston Bar Association, HBF is proud to be a major funder of Houston Volunteer Lawyers. The three-way relationship between HBF, HBA, and HVL allows each organization to provide their own unique strengths to maintain a strong commitment to providing equal justice for all.

A successful pro bono model of service delivery depends on the host organization, HVL, to identify applicants, determine eligibility for each, conduct an initial interview with each applicant, schedule and host weekly remote and in-person clinics, provide legal information and resources to the pro bono attorney for each client, be available for ongoing mentorship over the life of each case, and a million other tiny details that make the volunteer experience a good one.

Volunteers are critical to a successful pro bono model of service delivery and those volunteers come mainly from the membership of the HBA. In the 2023 audit of HVL's services, more than $14 million of donated services were documented thanks to the generosity of hundreds of private attorneys, law firms, corporate law departments, and solo practitioners.

The Houston Bar Foundation's annual financial support of HVL provides almost one-third of their entire budget. Especially important is that HBF's funding, unlike most of HVL's other funding, is unrestricted. Thanks to HBF, legal services can be provided free to individuals regardless of their immigration status. Veterans and their dependents are eligible no matter their discharge status or time of service. HBF funds also make sure that even if one funding source ends, the clients that were being served through it can continue to receive legal assistance until their issue has resolved.

Just like a three-legged stool, each partner is equally critical to offering and maintaining free legal assistance delivered by volunteer attorneys who are HBA members, managed by HVL, and funded by HBF. Together we strive to serve those most vulnerable and in greatest need in our community. This partnership results in a daily commitment to providing equal access to justice for all.

Monica Karuturi
Chair, 2023-2024
Houston Bar Foundation

A MESSAGE FROM THE 2023-2024 HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT



The Houston Bar Association is one of the largest metropolitan bar associations in the nation. With a membership of more than 11,000 members, HBA members have hundreds of opportunities to expand their legal knowledge through professional development programs, grow their networks through committee and section involvement, and volunteer their time to support good causes in partnership with dozens of local charitable organizations. One especially rewarding volunteer opportunity that hundreds of HBA members choose each year is to provide legal assistance to the clients served by our partner organization, Houston Volunteer Lawyers.

During my year as HBA President, 1,009 attorneys donated 22,277 number of hours providing advice and counsel and offering full representation to more than 5,000 clients who otherwise would not have legal assistance with their matters. At any given time, HBA members are working with 1,000 HVL clients on issues including expungement, record clearing, estate planning, probate, IRS tax disputes, evictions, name change, guardianship of a disabled child upon reaching adulthood, custody, divorce, adoption, veteran discharge upgrades, and many more.

This past year, we expanded HVL's menu of services to offer legal assistance for Green Card holders who may be eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship through naturalization. Our bar members responded to this expansion with much excitement, and as a result, many bar members volunteered for the first time with HVL. It is an incredibly rewarding experience to help individuals through the citizenship process, and we encourage bar members to attend their HVL clients' Oath Ceremony, which is momentous for both the client and the attorney.

The beauty of HBA is that with its long history and the ongoing commitment of the membership, even when things change, the work goes on. In the spring of 2024, the HBA Executive Director, Mindy Davidson, retired after a 30-year law career and having served the HBA in the Executive Director position since 2019. The HBA welcomed Vinh Ho as our new Executive Director. Vinh, a frequent HVL volunteer, brings many talents to the role of Executive Director.

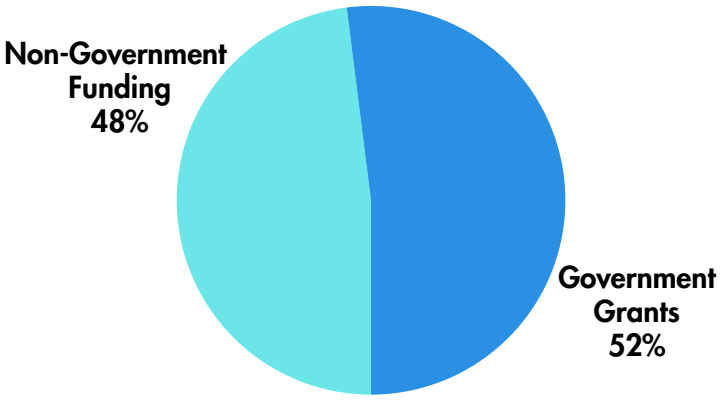
I completed my term of office in June. David Harrell, a former Chair of HVL himself, accepted the baton from me to serve as the 2024-2025 Houston Bar Association President. I know that the Houston Bar Association is in good hands, and I look forward to the continued success of the HBA and HVL.

Diana Gomez
President, 2023-2024
Houston Bar Association

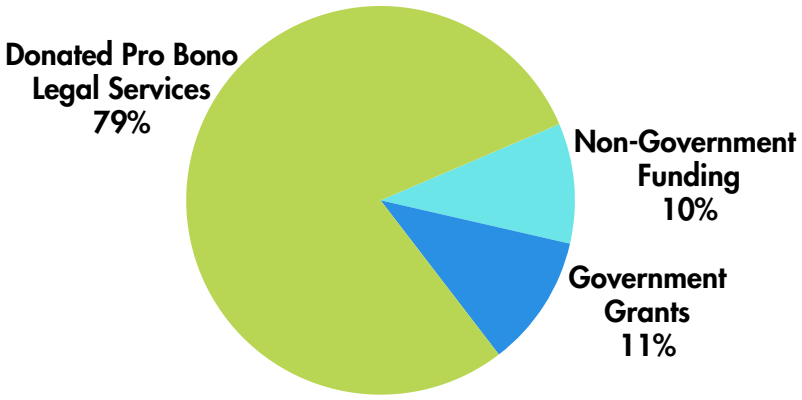
FINANCIAL REVIEW

The financial review is from the latest audited financial statements covering the period of January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. View the full audit.

Total Revenue = $3,500,306
(Without value of pro bono services included)



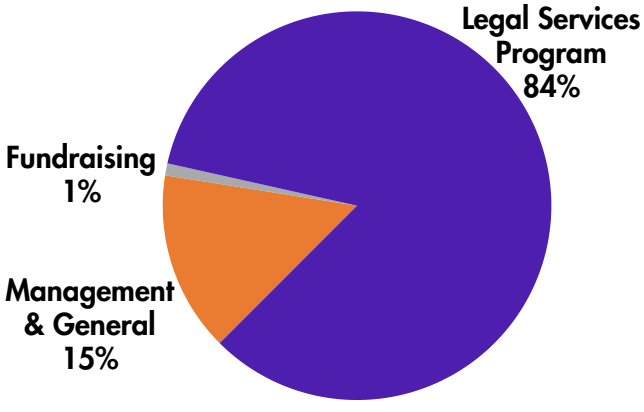
Total Revenue = $18,109,727
(With value of pro bono services included)



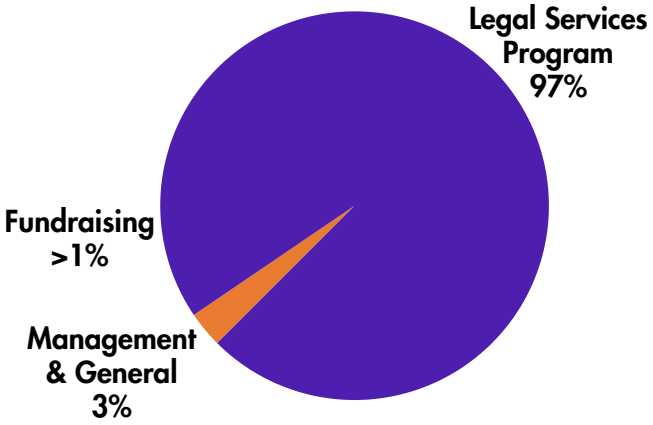
We thank the pro bono attorneys who not only donate their time and expertise, but also report their pro bono hours to Houston Volunteer Lawyers. In 2023, every dollar donated to Houston Volunteer Lawyers was matched with $5.17 of impact provided by the in-kind value of time given by pro bono attorneys providing legal services.

Money matters. Volunteer time matters. Pro Bono attorneys matter.
Pro Bono attorneys turn one dollar into $5.17.

Total Expenses = $3,310,023
(Without value of pro bono services included)



Total Expenses = $17,919,444
(With value of pro bono services included)



When including the value of pro bono services as an expense, 97% of total expenditures are used to deliver legal services. That means for every $1.00 donated to Houston Volunteer Lawyers, 97¢ go to providing free legal assistance as we promote equal access to justice!



HOUSTON VOLUNTEER LAWYERS

A SERVICE OF THE HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION

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