

**HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION
RESOLUTION SUPPORTING FUNDING FOR CIVIL LEGAL AID IN TEXAS**

WHEREAS, the Houston Bar Association is a professional organization of over 11,600 attorneys in Houston, Texas whose primary missions include promoting the administration of justice by providing access to legal services for all;

WHEREAS, the Houston Bar Association embraces the principles that our nation promises justice for all, not just for those who can afford to pay for it, and subscribes to the values Judge Learned Hand espoused when he said "If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment; Thou shalt not ration justice";

WHEREAS, the most recent U.S. Census reports that 3.9 million people live below the poverty level in Texas, and more than 5.1 million qualify for civil legal aid to the poor;

WHEREAS, Texas currently ranks 43rd in the nation in overall funding for legal services with approximately one legal aid attorney for every 11,500 low income Texans;

WHEREAS, low income Texans are the most vulnerable in our communities, including the elderly, persons with disabilities and victims of domestic abuse and for many poor Texans, access to legal help might be the only means of ensuring their safety, staying in their homes or putting food on their tables;

WHEREAS, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation was created by Supreme Court Order in 1984 to administer the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program to fund nonprofit organizations that provide free civil legal aid to low-income Texans and is the leading state funder for civil legal aid in Texas;

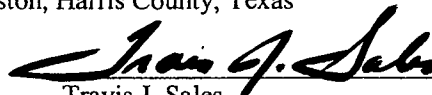
WHEREAS, the drop in interest rates has brought the IOLTA Program from \$20.1M in FY 2007 to \$12.2M in FY 2008 and is now estimated to drop to \$1.5M in FY 2010 and 2011 and would need \$37 million for a Biennium to offset the anticipated shortfall;

WHEREAS, Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Jefferson has made a request to the Texas Legislature for \$37 million from general revenue to offset the loss of IOLTA funds;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Houston Bar Association that the Houston Bar Association strongly supports Chief Justice Jefferson's request to the Texas Legislature for \$37 million from general revenue and requests such funds be allocated to bridge this loss of IOLTA funding.

FURTHER, that the President of the Houston Bar Association forward a copy of this Resolution to members of the Texas Legislature, the Lieutenant Governor and Governor of the State of Texas.

SIGNED this 23rd day of March, 2009, in Houston, Harris County, Texas



Travis J. Sales
President (2008-2009)
Houston Bar Association

Attest:



Denise Scofield
Secretary (2008-2009)
Houston Bar Association