



JAMES M. TERRELL

## VLP: Good for You and Me

As a young lawyer, are you interested in making a difference in your community? Are you looking to gain more experience or to handle cases outside your normal practice area? If so, the Alabama State Bar's Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) is a great way to use your legal skills to render service to citizens of Alabama. The VLP's purpose is to provide free legal services to low-income Alabamians in civil matters. By conservative estimates, there are over 723,000 persons living below the federal poverty level in Alabama and the numbers increase each year. With limited staff and budgets, federally-funded Legal Services' programs cannot handle all of these Alabamians' legal problems. As a result, many poor persons find themselves waiting for, or even without, legal representation in matters crucial to their well-being.

As a regular member of the Alabama State Bar, you can assist the VLP with this critical problem by voluntarily agreeing to handle not less than two civil case referrals over the next 12 months. If you cannot commit to this level of involvement, or if you hold a special membership in the bar, other options are available through the program to serve low-income Alabamians, such as performing intake and screening at an "advice-only" legal clinic or Legal Services office in your area, or serving as a speaker at a VLP-sponsored training seminar, or even recruiting for this program at bar association functions.

All potential VLP clients are first screened and interviewed for income eligibility by intake professionals. This assures that the client is indeed eligible for free legal assistance. All referrals to volunteer attorneys are made by the VLP director in Montgomery or by local pro bono coordinators (Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile) based upon the area of law involved in the client's problem. Following a conflicts check and assuming that the case is accepted by the volunteer lawyer, copies of intake information are forwarded to the attorney. The client is advised of the referral by letter from the program and is instructed to call the volunteer attorney immediately to schedule an appointment at a mutually convenient time. If the client fails to contact the attorney within 30 days, the case is closed.

# YOUNG LAWYERS' SECTION

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All cases are accepted on a *pro bono* basis and the volunteer attorney is expected to handle only the one specific legal problem of the client which was referred by the VLP. The VLP reporting requirements are simple. You are expected to complete cases referred to you. Three months after referral, the VLP director or local *pro bono* coordinator will send you a form to advise the program of the status of the case. You will also be asked to return a case-closing memo at completion advising the VLP of the final disposition of the case and the number of hours of services provided. Malpractice insurance coverage can be made available by the program at no cost to volunteer attorneys for *pro bono* cases handled through the VLP. If you are interested in learning more about the VLP, or if you are ready to enroll, contact **Linda Lund** at the Alabama State Bar. Linda can be reached at (334) 269-1515 or [linda.lund@alabar.org](mailto:linda.lund@alabar.org).

We will have our annual YLS Sandestin seminar this month, May 14-16. Each year, young lawyers from

around the state gather for a weekend of fun and learning at the beach. Our Sandestin seminar is the largest attended event that the YLS organizes each year. Typically, approximately 125 lawyers and their families attend the Sandestin seminar, but this year we hope to increase that number. As always, we will have some great speakers. This CLE seminar offers 6.2 hours of credit (with at least one CLE ethics hour). In addition to the CLE, there will be a variety of networking events planned for the weekend, including a golf tournament, beach parties, a silent auction and a cocktail reception with a band. The Sandestin CLE is made possible by the hard work of **Clay Lanham, David Cain, Shay Lawson, Katie Hammett, Larkin Peters, Brandon Hughey, Clifton Mosteller, and Brad Hicks**. It is not too late to sign up. Feel free to give me a call at (205) 939-0199 and I will send you a registration form. At \$300 (with a reduced fee of \$250 for first-year lawyers) this CLE is a bargain. I strongly encourage your participation this year. ▲▼▲



**It is more important than ever to understand your 401(k) fees.**

401(k) fees can be assessed as explicit out-of-pocket expenses or charged as a percentage of assets. These expenses can be charged to either the sponsoring law firm or the plan's participants. Often they are assessed both ways, in some combination to the firm and its participants.

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You should consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses of the investment options carefully before investing. For a copy of the Prospectus with more complete information, including charges and expenses associated with the Program, or to speak to a Program consultant, call 1-877-947-2272, or visit [www.abaretirement.com](http://www.abaretirement.com) or write ABA Retirement Funds P.O. Box 5142 • Boston, MA 02206-5142 • [abaretirement@us.ing.com](mailto:abaretirement@us.ing.com). Please read the information carefully before investing. The Program is available through the Alabama State Bar as a member benefit. However, this does not constitute, and is in no way a recommendation with respect to any security that is available through the Program. 03/09

