

Highlights
2006 Annual Report of the
Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission
filed with the Supreme Court on April 27, 2007

Illinois Lawyer Population

- There were 81,146 registered lawyers of October 31, 2006, reflecting a modest 1.4% increase from the year before. The number of newly admitted lawyers in 2006, however, set a record high, 2,249.

Record Number of Lawyers Practicing Outside Illinois

- 60,370 Illinois lawyers reported a principal business address within Illinois. Another 20,776 attorneys reported a business address outside state boundaries, the highest number ever and an increase of almost 10% from the year before.

Aging of the Profession

- There has been an 11% increase in the lawyer population aged between 50 and 74 over the past ten years.

Pro Bono Legal Services

- The *2006 Annual Report* provides a report on the amount of *pro bono* legal services performed by Illinois attorneys in 2006. Last year, 25,334 lawyers indicated that they provided such services totaling, in the aggregate, 2,088,209 worth of service hours. In addition, 12,471 lawyers reported making a total of \$17,423,168 in contributions to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Client Protection Program

- The Client Protection Program was created by the Supreme Court to reimburse clients who lost money as a result of the dishonest conduct by a lawyer. Last year, the program paid 111 claims totaling \$843,054, the second biggest year for award payments. In September 2006, the Court imposed an annual assessment of \$25 upon each lawyer in order to adequately fund the program. The new assessment will provide more than \$1.5 million in 2007 for the payment of claims. Due to this increase, the maximum allowed claim payment rose from \$25,000 to \$50,000. Nine other states have \$50,000 per-claim caps, and 15 have higher caps.

Grievances

- ARDC docketed 5,801 investigations involving 4,080 Illinois lawyers, a 4.6% decrease from the prior reporting period and the least number of charges filed against members of the bar since 2000. More than 68% of all grievances allege either a lawyer's failure to communicate or neglect. About 5% of the investigations resulted in the filing of formal disciplinary charges.

Formal Disciplinary Charges

- Formal disciplinary complaints were filed against 97 attorneys in 2006. The vast majority of formal charges involved allegations of misconduct by lawyers with more than 10 years experience, 84%.

Disciplinary Sanctions

- The Supreme Court sanctioned 144 lawyers, 68 of them by consent. Of those disciplined, 32 were disbarred. The majority of sanctioned lawyers, 69%, practiced in Cook County. More lawyers were disciplined for conduct involving fraud than any other offense.

Report on Probationary Sanctions

- The *2006 Annual Report* provides a report on the status of disciplinary probation sanctions. Since 1981, 2,440 lawyers have been sanctioned and 250 of those attorneys were suspended and then placed on disciplinary probation. A significant number of probation orders (almost 60%) involved substance abuse, substance dependence or mental impairment, where the lawyer was either in recovery or had received treatment for the impairment. Over the course of the 25-year study, less than 12% of those placed on probation violated the terms of discipline and probation was revoked.

New and Amended Rules

- The Illinois Supreme Court adopted new rules providing for the conditional admission of newly admitted attorneys. The Court also ordered all Illinois lawyers to report, during the ARDC registration process, the amount of *pro bono* legal services they have performed as well as the amount of money donated to legal service organizations providing *pro bono* services. The Court further required lawyers to place client funds in trust accounts maintained only at financial institutions. Finally, the Court increased the registration fees paid by active lawyers admitted for three years or more from \$239 to \$289.

ARDC Web Site

- For the 2007 registration year, 27,000 lawyers were able to register on-line or make changes to their registration information on the ARDC website.

Outreach and the Ethics Inquiry Program

- ARDC staff made more than 100 presentations to bar associations, law firms, law schools, continuing legal education groups and civic associations last year. The ARDC hosted a professional responsibility CLE program in Champaign in association with local bar associations for almost 500 lawyers. Finally, ARDC lawyers fielded over 3,100 calls from lawyers seeking guidance as part of the Ethics Inquiry Program.

Financial Report

- For 2006, ARDC revenue from lawyer registration fees increased only 1.7% over fees collected in 2005. Expenditures decreased slightly, due primarily to the departure of staff, some of whom were not replaced and others of whom were replaced at lower salaries. At the end of the fiscal year, funding reserves would have funded operations for less than five months. The Illinois Supreme Court, however, granted a registration fee increase to support adequate future funding.