

**2015 Hawai'i Access to Justice Conference**  
**"Engaging the Business Community in Access to Justice" Panel of**  
**Robbie Alm, Gregory Kim, Catherine Ngo, and Hoyt Zia,**  
**and moderated by Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald**

Chief Justice Recktenwald began the panel by explaining that surveys from other parts of the country strongly support the conclusion that business support for access to justice efforts make good business sense, in addition to being the right thing to do. Throughout the country, economic value studies have shown that increased provision of legal services to those of low and moderate incomes benefits not only those individuals, but also the local economy. Studies are showing that the time and money invested pays off at an exceptional rate: a New York study suggested there was a five dollar return to the economy for every dollar spent on civil legal services, and some studies have shown even higher returns.

Legal aid makes neighborhoods safer and more stable and desirable. For example, it reduces the number of abused and elderly who require emergency services and subsequent follow-up social services, thereby reducing the costs of those services for taxpayers. It brings federal monies into the state through assisting those in need with disability claims. And legal aid saves jobs by helping families obtain the right services for their children, leading to a more stable workforce.

The panel focused on the untapped potential for businesses' additional support of the access to justice movement in Hawai'i. At the outset, the panelists noted that the access to justice movement may have difficulty with messaging and defining "access to justice" for the lay understanding of the business community and community at-large. Suggestions to overcome this difficulty included working with professional marketers or advertising agencies, perhaps some used by the business community, to crystalize a message and convey stories about what is "access to justice," and how it helps the community. Analogies were made to graphic public service announcements which have an emotional impact on viewers, such as PSAs relating to methamphetamine. News stories, short videos, and commercials were also suggested.

Panelists also explained how one might "pitch" businesses for their support. Panelists emphasized that engaging leaders inside businesses to champion the causes would be helpful if not essential, and that many larger companies receive a large volume of requests from community organizations for support. Panelists explained that access to justice programs or organizations would likely be considered with and compete against other community

organizations relating to children, pets, and others. Attorneys--practicing or not--within businesses may be natural candidates to champion pro bono policies or access to justice causes to business leaders because these can assist in explaining what access to justice is, how it helps the community, and how it might uniquely help businesses. Some panelists expressed that regardless of economic benefits to the community, access to justice efforts will likely be considered among other worthy community causes.

Panelists explained that in addition to direct financial support, businesses may help legal services providers by vouching for them in the community; providing support at the Legislature; donating information technology services, hardware, or software; donating in-house marketing services; or donating time of businesses' staff for administrative, clerical, billing, or accounting services (with the caveat of ensuring no conflicts of interest).

Panelists also discussed businesses encouraging law firms to support legal services providers by asking firms directly to increase pro bono services, inquiring as to the types or amount of pro bono work of the firm, or asking the firm to support legal services providers by joining with the business in fundraisers or other support. Panelists cautioned that firms get many requests for support, and, additionally, businesses might not want to limit their options for their own legal work by eliminating potential firms with these inquiries or requests.

Panelists also discussed the apparent paradox of "too many attorneys" and "too few attorneys." Panelists considered the potential for a "lawyer training corps" similar to medical residencies, and other law firm models that could provide low-cost legal services.

The panel closed with a commitment to continuing the discussion of engaging the business community to improve access to justice in Hawai'i.