

YOUNG LAWYERS

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THE STATE BAR NEEDS YOU

As most of us are aware, there are a large number of West Virginians who are under represented in the civil court system. Back in the early 1980s, the Young Lawyers Executive Committee started the Lawyer Information and Referral Service (LRS). The LRS system was set up to help many of these previously unrepresented individuals.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with LRS, here is how it works. It is a system that matches West Virginia residents with lawyers located in their geographical area that can assist them with their particular needs. Every Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m. a member or members of the State Bar volunteer to work the phones for the referral service. In the past, members had to physically go to the State Bar Center to answer calls. Now the referral calls can be transferred directly to a lawyer's office. The lawyers who answer the calls take down basic information from each caller and then relay that information to Connie Blessing, LRS Coordinator at the State Bar. Connie then forwards to the caller the

phone number of at least two lawyers who practice in the same geographic region and specialize in the area of law related to his or her legal issue.

Any member of the State Bar can sign up as a practitioner in a particular area of law, including Family Law, Real Estate, Personal Injury, Workers Compensation, Estate Planning, etc. The cost to get on this list for a year is only \$50. The lawyer who receives a referral agrees to meet with the potential client and to only charge \$25 for the first 30 minutes. After that time, the lawyer to whom the referral is made may charge any hourly rate or contingent fee upon which both parties agree.

The service is an easy way for a person to find a lawyer in a particular area of the law located in his or her geographical area. The service is also an easy way for lawyers to get potential clients served to them on a silver platter. In other words, the system is a "win-win situation" for both the individual in need of a lawyer and the lawyer in need of a client.

Unfortunately, over the past few years it has been more and more difficult to find volunteers to "man the phones" for two hours on Tuesday night. I am asking each State Bar member to contact Connie at the State Bar to volunteer for one night this year. As stated above, you can volunteer from the comfort of your own office. Additionally, the Young Lawyers Executive Committee will bribe you. We will pay (out of our budget) for pizza of your choice to be delivered to your office the evening you volunteer. Volunteering only two hours this year is an easy way to get your pro bono hours while at the same time projecting the State Bar's positive image to the people of West Virginia.

The State Bar wants you to call Connie at (304) 558-7994 to sign up to be a referring attorney in one or more areas of practice. The State Bar needs you to call Connie to sign up to volunteer for one Tuesday evening this year. **WV**