



Joint Release from the:



## Legal Hotline Established for Flood Victims

*Partnership between Tennessee legal organizations helps residents*

NASHVILLE, May 6, 2010 (Updated May 7). A toll-free legal assistance line will be available starting tomorrow at 9 a.m. for victims of recent storms and flooding in the 30 counties that to date have been designated as federal disaster areas. The service, which allows callers to request the assistance of a lawyer, is a partnership between the Tennessee Bar Association, local bar associations and legal organizations in the state.

Victims facing legal issues may call (888) 395-9297 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. central time Monday through Friday to request assistance. Messages can be left at any time. Callers should identify that they are seeking flood-related legal assistance. Victims who qualify for assistance will be matched with Tennessee lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal help.

In addition, at the five Disaster Service Centers set up in the greater Nashville area, lawyers are on hand to answer legal questions. No appointments are needed. The centers are staffed from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Issues that generally arise after a natural disaster, and for which an attorney can provide help, include:

- \* Securing government benefits available to disaster victims
- \* Filing life, medical and property insurance claims
- \* Dealing with home repair contracts and contractors
- \* Replacing missing or destroyed wills and other legal documents
- \* Dealing with consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures
- \* Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems
- \* Counseling on landlord/tenant problems

### DISASTER DESIGNATIONS

To date, 21 counties in Tennessee have been designated as federal disaster areas. On May 4, President Barack Obama approved federal assistance for Cheatham, Davidson, Hickman and Williamson counties in Middle Tennessee.

On May 5, the president approved a disaster designation for six additional counties: Montgomery and Perry in Middle Tennessee and Dyer, McNairy, Shelby and Tipton in West Tennessee.

### UPDATED ON MAY 7

On May 6, the president approved another 17 counties. In West Tennessee they are: Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Decatur, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Haywood, Henderson, Houston, Madison and Obion counties. In Middle Tennessee they are: Dickson, Humphreys, Maury, Rutherford and Sumner.

### For more information

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Individuals affected by recent storms and flooding can [get more information about legal assistance here](#)

[See a list of Disaster Assistance Centers in the Nashville area](#)

Lawyers interested in helping storm victims with legal issues can [sign up here](#)

Lawyers helping disaster victims can [find resources here](#)

On May 7, the president approved another three counties for disaster assistance, bringing the total count to 30 counties. The new designations in Middle Tennessee are Robertson, Smith and Wilson counties.

#### **VOLUNTEER LAWYERS**

Lawyers around the state who are willing to handle flood-related cases on a pro bono basis are encouraged to sign up at <http://www.tba.org/volunteer>. Resources to help lawyers answer disaster questions also are available on the site. One of the most requested resources is the Disaster Legal Services Manual developed by the TBA Young Lawyers Division. It is available for download at [http://www.tba.org/YLD/disaster\\_manual.pdf](http://www.tba.org/YLD/disaster_manual.pdf)

#### **MORE INFORMATION**

Those in need of additional information about legal services can visit the TBA website at <http://www.tba.org/volunteer> for an updated list of clinics and other resources.

#### **PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS**

The following nine legal organizations have joined forces to establish a toll-free phone line for Tennessee flood victims to request free legal assistance, and to provide volunteer attorneys to handle cases arising from recent storm damage.

**Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland (LAS)** -- LAS was founded in 1968 as Legal Services of Nashville by eight members of the Nashville Bar Association. It has since expanded and consolidated with other organizations to help low-income people in 48 counties through eight offices. The organization focuses on individual cases and community education, and serves over 7,000 people each year. Legal Aid Society's mission is to enforce, advance and defend the legal rights of low-income and vulnerable families in order to obtain for them the basic necessities of life. The Legal Aid Society also houses and directs the Nashville Pro Bono Program, many of whose members also will be available to provide legal help to disaster victims. For more information contact LAS at (615) 244-6610 or visit the agency online at <http://www.las.org>.

**Memphis Bar Association (MBA)** -- Established in 1874, the Memphis Bar Association (MBA) is a voluntary association of attorneys and judges upholding high standards of integrity in the legal profession through continuing professional education, supporting legal services to all in the community, and educating the public about law and the administration of justice. In 2008, the MBA debuted [legalhelp.memphisbar.org](http://www.legalhelp.memphisbar.org), a website dedicated to assisting the people of Memphis & Shelby County, Tenn. For more information contact the MBA at (901) 527-3573 or visit the association online at <http://www.memphisbar.org>.

**Memphis Area Legal Services (MALS)** -- Since 1970, MALS has been committed to equal justice for all people, helping children, families and individuals solve problems that affect their basic needs. MALS serves nearly 8,000 people in distress each year. Its service area includes Fayette, Lauderdale, Shelby and Tipton counties. For more information contact (901) 523-8822 or visit the agency's website at <http://www.malsi.org>.

**Nashville Bar Association (NBA)** -- The Nashville Bar Association, established in 1831, is a professional organization serving the legal community of Nashville, Tennessee. The mission of the Nashville Bar Association is to improve the practice of law through Education, Service, and Fellowship. The NBA, with nearly 3,000 members, is the largest metropolitan bar association in Tennessee. The NBA helps its members stay informed through its award-winning publication, the Nashville Bar Journal, that provides essential information such as views from the bench, legal developments and legislative updates, continuing legal education schedules, and announcements and reviews of NBA events. Members also have 24-hour access to NBA information and other legal resources at our website and receive periodic electronic communications to keep them informed. For more information contact (615) 242-9272 or visit the association's website at <http://www.nashvillebar.org>.

**Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS)** -- TALS is a statewide non-profit organization that seeks to build partnerships to support the delivery of effective civil legal services to low-income and elderly Tennesseans. TALS is committed to increasing equal access to justice across Tennessee. For more information call (615) 627-0956 or visit the alliance online at <http://www.tals.org>.

**Tennessee Association for Justice (TAJ)** -- The TAJ is a member organization comprised primarily of plaintiff attorneys from across the state. Through advocacy and education, TAJ works to protect the civil justice system and ensure that every citizen has access to justice. For more information visit <http://www.tnaj.org> or call (615) 329-3000.

**Tennessee Justice Center (TJC)** -- The TJC is a non-profit public interest law and advocacy firm serving Tennessee's families. It gives priority to policy issues and civil cases in which the most basic necessities of life are at stake and where advocacy can benefit needy families statewide. TJC works to empower its clients by holding government accountable for its policies and actions. TJC was established in 1996 and is located at 301 Charlotte Avenue, Nashville, TN. For additional information about the Tennessee Justice Center and its services visit <http://www.tnjustice.org> or call (615) 255-0331.

**Tennessee Bar Association (TBA)** -- The TBA is the largest professional association in Tennessee with over 10,000 members. Founded in 1881, the TBA provides opportunities for continuing legal education, professional development and public service. The TBA's dedication to serving the state's legal community is evidenced by its membership roll, which represents the entire spectrum of legal practice: plaintiff and defense lawyers, corporate counsel, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, government lawyers and legal services attorneys. Its Young Lawyers Division, comprised of lawyers in their first five years of practice or under 36 years of age, is dedicated to serving the public and the profession as the "service arm of the bar." For more information about the TBA call (615) 383-7421 or visit the association's website at <http://www.tba.org>.

**West Tennessee Legal Services, Inc. (WTLS)** -- WTLS is a non-profit organization that provides assistance in civil cases to individuals, families and communities. It services 17 West Tennessee counties including Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Dyer, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henry, Henderson, Lake, McNairy, Madison, Obion and Weakley. For more information call (731) 423-0616 or visit the agency's website at <http://www.wtls.org>.

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