

Mattie Cohan

From: Diana White [dwhite@lafchicago.org]
Sent: Friday, March 11, 2011 5:45 PM
To: Mattie Cohan
Subject: Strategic Planning Comments

I have just signed on to a letter from a number of Executive Directors of LSC-funded programs, which proposes that raising lawyer salaries be an explicit goal in LSC's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. If you haven't received the group's letter yet, you will soon.

I wanted to make two additional points on the same topic.

First, it may seem strange to be thinking about salary levels at a time when funding cuts for LSC as a whole are such a big topic of discussion on Capitol Hill. But the whole purpose of the Strategic Plan is to look beyond the crises of a particular point in time and set a vision for LSC and the whole network of programs it funds for the next five years.

Second, at LAF (and I suspect at many other programs), we have not experienced much lawyer turnover since the fall of 2008. There are two reasons for that: (a) in the current economic climate, our lawyers cannot leave for better-paying positions; and (b) if an attorney does leave (typically because a spouse has lost a job or is relocating), we are not replacing that lawyer. Nonetheless, as the economy begins to pick up, I expect us to experience the turnover problems we all saw before the downturn hit (as reflected in the many studies done in the mid-2000's and cited in the group's letter). I worry that it will be like pulling a cork out of a bottle -- the economic hardship legal aid lawyers always experience will seem even tougher to accept once the dry spell is over and there are alternatives again.

Thank you for letting me express my views on this important question.

Sincerely,

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