

Dear Colleague at Law:

We write you today with a plea that goes to the heart of our ideals as lawyers: Join us in helping Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA) keep the doors to the courthouse open for battered women and abused children. As lawyers, we know how critical legal representation is to obtaining the protections promised by law. AVDA's capacity to provide the poorest of abuse victims with lawyers to help negotiate the legal system is in serious jeopardy.

Legal aid in Texas has long been funded by the interest paid on lawyers' trust accounts (IOLTA). When interest rates hit zero in late 2008, **IOLTA funding all but dried up**. But the clients didn't stop coming. The same recession that has AVDA scrambling for funds puts intense pressure on families. In thousands of local families, the conflict is turning violent. These days, AVDA's waiting room more often resembles an emergency room than a law firm lobby.

Let us tell you about AVDA: Founded in 1980, AVDA is one of only nine legal-aid agencies in the U.S. exclusively devoted to providing free, in-court representation to low-income abuse victims. The victims are primarily battered women and abused or molested children. In 2009, seven AVDA staff attorneys closed 1,821 litigation cases. Any one of us would be proud to claim that level of productivity and dedication!

AVDA deals with the messiest, most heart-rending of cases: getting a mother of four divorced from the estranged husband who capped off years of beatings by shooting her in the head at point-blank range, leaving her blind and paralyzed... terminating the parental rights of a man who anally raped his four-year-old daughter... fighting to reunite a 6- and 7-year old traumatized by witnessing their mother's murder with the grandmother who makes them feel safe. AVDA lawyers help make these victims' voices heard in court. Not a one of AVDA's underpaid, overworked young lawyers would be out of place in a modern retelling of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

You and I can't do this life-altering work on a daily basis...but we can help insure that it continues. In fact, **we have an obligation**—to ourselves and the values that led us to law, to the profession and to society—to insure that the most vulnerable among us have access to the courts.

Won't you join us by **donating the equivalent of one billable hour** or with a one-time donation of \$1,500, \$2,500 or \$5,000 to AVDA's annual fundraiser?

Regards,

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