



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

## ■ LAWYER POPULATION

The names of 89,330 lawyers appeared on the Master Roll of Attorneys as of October 31, 2012. That number does not include 2,203 attorneys who took their oath of office in late 2012. The overall lawyer population in Illinois saw a modest increase of 1.6% from 2011. The percentage of attorneys reporting a principal address outside Illinois remained at 27% of the total registered lawyer population. There are 323 Illinois lawyers who serve on active military duty.

## ■ GRIEVANCES AND FORMAL DISCIPLINARY CHARGES

During 2012, the ARDC docketed 6,397 investigations, a 3.9% increase from the prior year and the highest number of docketed investigations since 1996. Much of the increase is attributable to a Supreme Court rule requiring financial institutions to report any overdraft on a lawyer's trust account. In 2012, the ARDC received 421 such reports. More than half of all grievances filed involved issues of poor attorney-client relations, typically neglect of a client matter (38% of all grievances) or failure to communicate with a client (20% of all grievances). Consistent with prior years, the top practice areas likely to attract a grievance include criminal law, domestic relations, tort, and real estate.

## ■ DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

During 2012, the Supreme Court entered 103 sanctions against 102 lawyers (one lawyer was disciplined twice in 2012). The Court suspended an additional 7 lawyers on an emergency basis. Cook County practitioners accounted for 43% of all disciplined lawyers. Approximately 22% of those disciplined in 2012 had one or more identified substance abuse or mental impairment issues. About 88% of sanctioned lawyers were sole practitioners.

## ■ PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

The ARDC continues to be a national leader in providing professional responsibility training and ethics seminars to the profession and public. Commission personnel made 220 presentations to bar associations, government agencies, law firms, law schools, public interest groups and other organizations in 2012. The ARDC also produced several Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) accredited webcasts posted on the

agency's website. More than 34,000 Illinois lawyers watched those webcasts and earned up to seven hours of ethics and professionalism MCLE credit at no cost.

#### ■ PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Despite a still sluggish economy, the percentage of lawyers making monetary contributions to support legal services for the poor increased slightly to 18%, as compared to 17.4% of lawyers who contributed in 2011. Almost \$16 million was donated to fund legal services to the poor in 2012. In addition \$42 of every annual registration fee last year was used to fund legal services in this state. Since 2003, the first year that the ARDC began collecting the funds, more than \$26 million has been remitted to the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois. Finally, over 30,000 lawyers provided *pro bono* legal services in 2012, totaling 2,142,527 hours of legal aid.

#### ■ CLIENT PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Supreme Court of Illinois established the Client Protection Program (CPP) to reimburse clients who lose money due to the dishonest conduct of lawyers. The maximum available award is \$75,000 per claim and \$750,000 per lawyer. In 2012, CPP approved 70 claims against 34 lawyers and paid \$986,771 to claimants. Six approvals were for the \$75,000 maximum, 31 were for \$2,500 or less.

#### ■ ASSISTANCE TO THE BAR AND TO THE PUBLIC

In 2012, ARDC staff paralegals provided assistance to over 5,000 people seeking help, including information about specific lawyers and ARDC procedures. In addition, the ARDC Ethics Inquiry Program, a telephone inquiry resource, continued to serve attorneys seeking help in resolving hypothetical, ethical dilemmas. In 2012, staff lawyers responded to 4,541 ethics inquiries. Questions about a lawyer's obligation to report the misconduct of another attorney continue to be the most frequent area of inquiry posed to the Program. Also, the ARDC publishes and distributes free of charge booklets containing the Rules of Professional Conduct as well as *The Client Trust Account Handbook*, which details a lawyer's duties to safeguard client funds and property. Last year, the ARDC published on its website articles concerning the ethics of closing a law practice and of departing a law firm.

THE ARDC WEBSITE IS: [WWW.IARDC.ORG](http://WWW.IARDC.ORG)