



# ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS 2014

**ARDC**



ATTORNEY  
REGISTRATION  
& DISCIPLINARY  
COMMISSION



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# Mission Statement



## THE ATTORNEY REGISTRATION AND DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

The Illinois Supreme Court has original and exclusive jurisdiction to regulate the admission and discipline of lawyers in Illinois. Since 1973, administrative responsibility for the registration and discipline of Illinois lawyers has been delegated by the Illinois Supreme Court to the ARDC. The ARDC assists the Court in regulating the legal profession through attorney registration, education, investigation, prosecution and remedial action.

# Lawyer Population

Through the annual registration process, the ARDC prepares and maintains a Master Roll of Attorneys, consisting of the names of all registered lawyers, including those authorized to practice law.

- **92,756** Illinois lawyers registered on the 2014 Master Roll of Attorneys, a **1.8%** increase from 2013
- **64,439** lawyers (69%) reported a principal address in Illinois, a **0.4%** decrease from 2013
- **45,171** lawyers (70%) of all lawyers with a principal address in Illinois are located in Cook County
- **28,317** lawyers (31%) reported an address outside Illinois, a **7.4%** increase from 2013
- **52%** of lawyers reported that they have malpractice insurance
- **81%** of lawyers in private practice reported that they or their law firm maintained an IOLTA trust account in 2014
- **30,213** Illinois lawyers reported that they had provided more than **2,030,414** hours of *pro bono* legal services in 2014
- **17,179** Illinois lawyers reported **\$14,270,521** in monetary contributions to *pro bono* legal services organizations



**GENDER**

- 62% Male
- 38% Female



**YEARS IN PRACTICE**

- 13% < 5 yrs.
- 17% 5-10 yrs.
- 24% 10-20 yrs.
- 23% 20-30 yrs.
- 23% > 30 yrs.



**AGE**

- 6% 21-29
- 51% 30-49
- 41% 50-74
- 2% > 75

# GRIEVANCES AND FORMAL DISCIPLINARY CHARGES

The ARDC handles discipline matters fairly and promptly, balancing the rights of the lawyers involved and the protection of the public, the courts and the legal profession. Grievances are investigated confidentially. Disciplinary prosecutions are adjudicated publicly and result in recommendations to the Court for disposition. Our boards consist of independent, diverse groups of volunteer lawyers and non-lawyers who make recommendations in disciplinary matters.



- **5,921** grievances were docketed against **3,935** different attorneys, representing about **4%** of all registered attorneys
- **54%** of all grievances involved issues of poor attorney-client relations: neglect of a client matter (**39%** of all grievances) or failure to communicate with a client (**15%** of all grievances)
- Top practice areas likely to attract a grievance include criminal law, domestic relations, real estate, and tort
- **3%** of all grievances resulted in the filing of formal disciplinary charges in 2014
- **118** formal disciplinary complaints were filed in 2014
- **76%** alleged fraudulent or deceptive activity typically alleged in conjunction with other charges such as neglect, improper trust account management or criminal conduct
- **26%** of all formal complaints voted in 2014 arose out of at least one attorney (aka “Himmel” report)



# Disciplinary Sanctions

The Supreme Court has sole authority to sanction attorneys for misconduct, except for a reprimand, which can be imposed in a disciplinary case without order of the Court by either the Hearing or Review Board.

- **116** sanctions were entered against **115** lawyers (*one lawyer was disciplined twice in 2014*): **112** sanctions entered by the Illinois Supreme Court and four reprimands administered by the Hearing Board
- **6** lawyers were suspended on an emergency basis by the Court in 2014
- **13** lawyers were placed on probation with conditions
- **48%** of disciplined lawyers were Cook County practitioners
- **27%** of sanctioned lawyers in 2014 had one or more identified substance abuse or mental impairment issues
- **57%** of sanctioned lawyers were sole practitioners



A significant part of the ARDC's activities is the education of Illinois lawyers and the public through seminars, publications and outreach on the ethical duties of lawyers. Education and outreach efforts are vital tools in the ARDC's efforts to help lawyers serve their clients effectively and professionally, avoid potential harm to clients and minimize possible grievances later.



## Education and Public Outreach

### THOSE EFFORTS INCLUDE:

#### **Speaking Engagements**

ARDC personnel made 274 presentations to bar associations, government agencies, law firms, law schools, public interest groups and other organizations in 2014.

#### **MCLE Accredited Seminars**

ARDC produced several Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) accredited webcasts posted on the agency's website. More than 16,500 Illinois lawyers watched those webcasts in 2014 and earned up to seven hours of ethics and professionalism MCLE credit at no cost.

#### **Ethics Inquiry Program**

ARDC Ethics Inquiry Program, a telephone inquiry resource, continued to serve attorneys seeking help in resolving hypothetical, ethical dilemmas. In 2014, staff lawyers responded to 4,203 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.

#### **ARDC Website**

ARDC website continues to be a leading on-line resource for public information concerning all aspects of lawyer regulation. The site attracts an average of 111,000 visits each month and, during 2014, the total number of visits exceeded 1.3 million. Approximately 81% of all Illinois lawyers utilized the on-line registration program. The ARDC regularly posts important ethics and professionalism updates on the website and also sends e-mail alerts to members of the Illinois bar regarding events that impact on a lawyer's ethical duties.

#### **Assistance to the Public**

ARDC staff paralegals provided assistance to approximately 18,400 people in 2014, including information about specific lawyers and ARDC procedures.

# CLIENT PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Supreme Court of Illinois created the Client Protection Program in 1994 to reimburse clients who lost money as the result of the dishonest conduct of an Illinois lawyer.

The Client Protection Program is funded by an annual assessment paid by most lawyers and remitted to the Client Protection Program Trust Fund. Rule 756 sets the assessment amount at \$25 per lawyer. The maximum available award available for claimants is \$100,000 per claim and \$1,000,000 per lawyer.

- 95 claims were approved against 40 lawyers and paid \$1,300,775.
- 77% of approved claims involved unearned fee claims and 27% of payouts.
- 23% of approved claims involved conversion and 73% of payouts.



## ATTORNEY REGISTRATION & DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

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