



INFORMATION RELEASE FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2015

ANNUAL ILLINOIS LAWYER REPORT RELEASED ON LAW DAY

The Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (ARDC), the administrative agency that regulates licensed Illinois lawyers, has filed its year 2014 Annual Report with the Supreme Court of Illinois. The report was released to the public this morning when a copy was posted on the ARDC website: www.iardc.org.

A summary of the annual report entitled *Highlights from the 2014 Annual Report* is attached to this information release.

The ARDC annually evaluates the effectiveness of the disciplinary system. Complete and comprehensive statistics concerning the disciplinary caseload are submitted to the Illinois Supreme Court and are published in the Annual Report. Few professions account for their regulatory activity in such detail.

In its Annual Report, the ARDC accounts to the Supreme Court for money received and spent. No tax money is used to fund the agency. All operating funds are taken from an annual registration fee paid by Illinois attorneys. Most lawyers now pay an annual fee of \$382. Of that amount, \$95 is remitted to the Lawyers Trust Fund to fund legal services for the poor; \$7 is sent to the Lawyers' Assistance Program, an organization that helps lawyers, judges, law students, and their families with alcohol abuse, drug dependency, or mental health problems; \$25 is submitted to the Supreme Court's Commission on Professionalism; \$25 funds the Client Protection Program to indemnify victims of lawyer misconduct; and the balance of the registration fee is used by the ARDC to pay for lawyer regulation.

Annual reports for every year since the ARDC's founding in 1973 are published at the ARDC website under the tab marked: **ARDC Organizational Information**. The website also includes the Master Roll of Attorneys in Illinois and permits a user to search for certain basic public registration information, including the business address and public disciplinary record, of Illinois lawyers. The site attracts an average of 111,000 visits each month and, in 2014, visitors totaled more than 1.3 million. It has a searchable database of disciplinary decisions.

The ARDC consists of four members of the Illinois Bar and three non-lawyers appointed by the Supreme Court. The ARDC Chairman is Joan Myers Eagle of Chicago. The Vice Chair is James R. Mendillo of Belleville. The Commissioners receive no compensation for their services. The Commissioners create ARDC policies, establish an operating budget, appoint members of the Inquiry and Hearing Boards, and manage the Client Protection Program. Subject to the approval of the Supreme Court, the Commissioners appoint the ARDC's chief executive officer, the Administrator. The Administrator is Jerome Larkin.

There are two ARDC offices: One Prudential Plaza in Chicago and 3161 White Oaks Drive in Springfield.

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THE ARDC WEBSITE: WWW.IARDC.ORG



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

■ LAWYER POPULATION

The names of 92,756 lawyers appeared on the Master Roll of Attorneys as of October 31, 2014. That number does not include 1,902 attorneys who took their oath of office in late 2014. The overall lawyer population in Illinois saw a modest increase of 1.8% over 2013. The percentage of attorneys reporting a principal address outside Illinois increased 7.4% from the year before. The number of female lawyers has slowly but steadily risen over the last 20 years. Female lawyers are 38% of Illinois lawyers in 2014, a 1% increase over the prior year. Ten years ago, women lawyers made up 32% of the legal profession in 2004 and only 25% of Illinois lawyers in 1994. There are 371 Illinois lawyers who serve on active military duty.

■ GRIEVANCES AND FORMAL DISCIPLINARY CHARGES

During 2014, the ARDC docketed 5,921 investigations, a 2.5% decrease from the prior year and the lowest number of docketed investigations since 2010. More than half of all grievances involved issues of poor attorney-client relations, typically neglect of a client matter (39% of all grievances) or failure to communicate with a client (15% of all grievances). Consistent with recent annual reports, the top practice areas likely to attract a grievance include criminal law, domestic relations, real estate and tort. In 2014, 3% of all grievances resulted in formal disciplinary charges, a statistic consistent with past years. There were 126 new proceedings brought before the ARDC Hearing Board, the most since 2009. Fraudulent or deceptive activity was the most common charged lodged against a lawyer who became the subject of a formal proceeding.

■ DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

In 2014, the Supreme Court of Illinois entered 112 sanction orders against 111 lawyers (one lawyer was disciplined twice in 2014). An additional 6 lawyers were suspended on an emergency basis. Of the lawyers disciplined, 48% were Cook County practitioners. Of the lawyers sanctioned, 24% had one or more identified substance abuse or mental impairment issues. The majority of lawyers sanctioned, 57%, were sole practitioners.

■ EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

A significant goal of the ARDC is to educate Illinois lawyers and the public about the ethical duties of attorneys. In 2014, ARDC personnel made 274 presentations to bar associations, government agencies, law firms, law schools, public interest groups and other organizations. The ARDC also produced several Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) accredited webcasts posted on the agency's website. More than 16,500 Illinois lawyers watched those webcasts and earned up to seven hours of ethics and professionalism MCLE credit at no cost. The 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.

■ ASSISTANCE TO THE BAR AND TO THE PUBLIC

ARDC staff paralegals rendered assistance to approximately 18,400 people seeking help during 2014, including providing public information about specific lawyers and ARDC procedures. The ARDC website continues to be a leading on-line resource for 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. The most visited feature is the Lawyer Search function. With over 2 million page views last year, this feature enables visitors to search the Master Roll for certain basic public registration information about lawyers, including principal address and public disciplinary information. The agency 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.

■ CLIENT PROTECTION PROGRAM

The Supreme Court of Illinois created the Client Protection Program 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 each Illinois lawyer. Last year, 95 claims were approved against 40 lawyers and a total of \$1,300,775 was paid to victims. Of the paid awards, 77% involved unearned fee claims and 27% of dealt with a lawyer who misappropriated client funds.

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