

# Public Information/Education



## Public Information

With the increasing number of legal questions and issues that permeate daily life, navigating aspects of the law can sometimes be trying. With that in mind, The Missouri Bar seeks to provide the necessary educational and informational materials to help the public find answers to its questions about the law and the justice system.

Having established itself as a leading source of information about the justice system and the role of lawyers in society, The Missouri Bar continues to expand and improve the resources it makes available to the public and uphold its commitment to education.

The most recognizable product of The Missouri Bar's public information program is a series of brochures explaining basic aspects of the legal system. These brochures are grouped into "resource guides" offering information in six general categories: client information, probate law, family law, consumer law, business law, and law and the courts. With more than 50 brochure titles in The Missouri Bar's public information library, citizens can find information about nearly every aspect of the legal system – from traffic violations to divorce or the need for a will. The Missouri Bar distributes the resource guides in locales such as libraries, government offices, county courthouses, city halls and attorneys' offices, in addition to direct requests from the public. Missourians receive more than 100,000 copies of the resource guides each year.

In addition to these printed materials, The Missouri Bar places a strong emphasis on the use of technology. The growing importance of the Internet and e-mail has opened the door to new ways in which to reach the public with important legal information. The Missouri Bar's website ([www.mobar.org](http://www.mobar.org)) boasts thousands of pages and documents detailing virtually every program, activity and service provided by the state bar. Almost all of this material is also available on the website as a downloadable document. The Missouri Bar website is an increasingly crucial means of communicating with Missourians who wish to learn more about the law and the justice system.

Recognizing the growing importance of the Internet as a vehicle for distribution of information to the public about the justice system, The Missouri Bar in late 2011 redesigned its website to facilitate the public's search for information about legal issues. Those who visit the site will find prominent links to: help them find a lawyer; gain access to valuable citizenship education materials of

interest to teachers, students and Missouri citizens; and a comprehensive array of helpful brochures, resources and other information designed to help Missourians understand their rights, the law and the justice system.

The Missouri Bar also hosts another website, [www.ShowMeCourts.org](http://www.ShowMeCourts.org), which offers a wealth of information about Missouri's judicial system. It includes details about the structure of the state's judiciary, the difference between partisan and non-partisan judicial elections, information for jurors, and even lesson plans for educators.

In addition – in recognition of their growing importance as a communications resource – The Missouri Bar in 2011 established an official presence on several social media platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Through these outlets, the state bar will be able to carry its message to ever-larger groups of people.

The Missouri Bar understands that, despite its best efforts, it cannot always place information about the legal system directly into the hands of the public. Accordingly, The Missouri Bar recognizes that the state's news media play an important role in disseminating timely information to the general public. The state bar strives to maintain a partnership with print and broadcast journalists to ensure that Missourians gain a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

Working closely with reporters and news directors to explore crucial legal issues is the main goal of The Missouri Bar's media relations efforts. Missouri Bar officers and members of the Board of Governors often meet with representatives of the news media to discuss pressing legal issues of the day. Additionally, The Missouri Bar's Communications and Media Relations departments serve as a resource for reporters, fielding questions and arranging interviews with bar officers.

Continuing in 2011 was The Missouri Bar's cooperative advertising campaign with the Missouri Broadcasters Association. The year's video and radio advertisements focused on the role of the Non-Partisan Court Plan in ensuring a fair and impartial judiciary; the speakers' bureau operated by The Missouri Bar; and resources available from the bar for dealing with finances, particularly *The Money Guide*.

In 2012, those advertisements will address: bar resources available to help minimize the effects of a natural disaster; how lawyers help businesses grow; and understanding the Non-Partisan Court Plan.

An important public education initiative that will be undertaken in 2012 is the Judicial Performance Evaluation Survey. Seven committees – each composed of six lawyers and six non-lawyers – will conduct comprehensive reviews of merit-selected judges seeking retention at the 2012 general election. As part of the review process, the committees will consider lawyer evaluations, juror evaluations, in-court observation and samples of judges’ written opinions in developing recommendations to “retain” or “not retain” each of the 50 judges seeking retention. The complete results of the evaluations – including the raw data from the lawyer and juror surveys, as well as the judges’ written opinions – will be posted on The Missouri Bar’s website in the fall of 2012. This will give voters the chance to educate themselves about these judges prior to casting their judicial ballot.

## Citizenship Education

The Missouri Bar has always been committed to providing quality citizenship education opportunities for teachers and students throughout the state. The Missouri Bar Citizenship Education Program sponsors workshops for teachers, coordinates lawyer resources for classrooms, and publishes and distributes citizenship education materials. The Missouri Bar also partners with other civic education groups such as the YMCA Youth in Government program, KIDS Voting Missouri, and 4-H.

At The Missouri Bar’s annual Statewide Conference for Educators, 60 teachers gathered on October 4, 2011 at the Reynolds Alumni Center in Columbia to learn how to use the *We the People* materials to prepare their students for Missouri’s required end-of-course test in government. This in-service has also been presented twice at regional in-services, and additional in-services are scheduled for 2012. The Missouri Bar supported the institution of the test so that government/civics would be a priority in Missouri’s high schools. The Missouri Bar Foundation provides the funding for the conferences.

Throughout 2011, The Missouri Bar continued to serve as state coordinator for the various civic education programs provided through the Center for Civic Education, which is funded by Congress: *We the People and the Constitution*, *Project Citizen* and *Representative Democracy in America*. Congress eliminated funding for these programs for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. However, due to the large number of teachers who have both *We the People* and *Project Citizen* materials, The Missouri Bar will continue to support these programs by virtue of a grant from The Missouri Bar Foundation.

The *We the People* statewide constitutional hearings were held on January 31, 2011, in Columbia. Joplin High School won the state competition and represented Missouri

at the national constitutional hearings, which were held in May. Due to financial support from the Young Lawyers’ Section of The Missouri Bar, there was a statewide hearing on January 23, 2012 in Jefferson City. Missouri lawyers and judges comprise a substantial portion of the judging panels for these hearings.

*Project Citizen* is a civic education program for middle school students that actively engages students in learning how to monitor and influence public policy and encourages civic participation among students, their parents, and members of the community. As a class project, students work together to identify and study a public policy issue, eventually developing an action plan for implementing their policy. Missouri’s Project Citizen Showcase is held annually at the State Capitol in Jefferson City. The 2011 Showcase took place on May 5.

The Center for Civic Education awarded Missouri a professional development grant for a summer institute in 2011, which was held July 11-14 at Columbia College. The featured constitutional scholars were Dr. Rick Hardy and Dr. Fred Spiegel. In conjunction with the Missouri Supreme Court Civic Education Committee, The Missouri Bar will again sponsor a summer institute July 16-19 on the topic of Missouri courts. The program will consist of scholarly presentations on the rule of law, the role of the courts in a system of separation of powers and checks and balances, judicial review, and the Missouri Non Partisan Court Plan. There also will be pedagogical sessions on how to teach about these topics and the institute will end with mock Supreme Court hearings at the Supreme Court of Missouri. The institute is funded by The Missouri Bar Foundation.

On September 16, The Missouri Bar hosted its sixth annual Constitution Day program, this year focusing on the role of the presidency. The program was broadcast from White Haven, the St. Louis family home of Julia Dent Grant, wife of President Ulysses S. Grant. The 2011 Constitution Day Program had two different live events: a 10:00 a.m. broadcast focused on domestic issues and a 1:00 p.m. session focused on international issues. Both programs featured taped statements from former Presidents George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton. Constitution Day participants had the opportunity to listen to a panel of experts on these topics and to submit their own questions and comments to the panel. Panelists were:

- John Truman, great nephew of President Harry S Truman. Mr. Truman is a member of The Missouri Bar, served as a defense attorney at the My Lai trials and has practiced law with F. Lee Bailey.
- Greg Willard, former attorney for President Gerald Ford. Mr. Willard is a partner with the law firm of

Bryan Cave LLP. He is also an adjunct professor at the St. Louis University School of Law, where he teaches a course on presidential power.

- Dr. Dave Robertson, political science professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

The bar's partner for this program is HEC-TV in St. Louis. More than 10,000 students in Missouri and other states participated.

For many years, The Missouri Bar citizenship education program has partnered with the Missouri Press Association's Newspapers in Education program. This year, The Missouri Bar's contribution was a series of articles on the Civil War amendments to the Constitution.

In addition, The Missouri Bar and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education continue to co-sponsor the recognition banquet for 15 Outstanding Missouri Citizens chosen from Missouri's high school seniors. Members of the Advisory Committee on Citizenship Education – the state bar committee that oversees the work of the citizenship education department – assisted with the selection of the students who were recognized. The recognition banquet is held in March at the Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City.

In June, 4-Hers from around the state came to Jefferson City to participate in a citizenship seminar. The Missouri Bar coordinates the judicial track, which includes a civil and criminal mock trial and a mock appellate hearing at the Supreme Court.

## ***Make the connection ...***

The Missouri Bar has now established an official presence on three of the most popular social media platforms – Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter!

Lawyers, judges and colleagues throughout the state – and around the world – can now connect to The Missouri Bar using these three popular social media resources. It's the fast, easy and convenient way to stay abreast of the latest news and services offered by The Missouri Bar. With 24/7 access, information from your Missouri Bar is always available – wherever you are – via desktop, laptop or smartphone.

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