



THE IOWA STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Willard L. Boyd III
President

Dear Members:

The past few weeks have created enormous challenges for all of us and our communities. The Iowa State Bar Association has been working hard to ensure that during the COVID-19 crisis we are supporting our members in their service to clients, the courts, and their communities. Below is an update on ISBA's work during this time.

Support of Members in Service to their Clients

Given this pandemic and the various directives issued by the Governor, we realize that the practice of law needs to fundamentally change. We must do so quickly – it is not business as usual. It is no longer possible to continue to regularly go into the office to work and have in-person meetings with clients. Working remotely is now a necessity during this period. To help our members transition to a remote office setting, the ISBA is developing various webinars. The first one will take place on Tuesday, March 24. The speakers for this webinar will be Nick Critelli, the chair of the ISBA Ethics and Practice Guidelines Committee, Tre Critelli from the Office of Professional Responsibility, and Christy Cronin, ISBA's director of CLE programming. They will provide advice on how to adjust to a remote legal practice. More programming will follow in the coming days.

Remote Notarization and Witnessing

Many of our members have clients who need to have important time-sensitive documents executed, including wills, trusts, powers of attorney, real estate documents, and contracts. Some of these clients may be in nursing homes and hospitals, where it is currently impossible to meet with them in person. ISBA was in communication with both the Governor's office and the Iowa Judicial Branch on these issues. The Probate, Trust & Estate Planning Law Section provided valuable input on the issue. In the emergency proclamation issued on March 22, 2020, Governor Reynolds addressed remote notarization and witnessing. (<https://governor.iowa.gov/press-release/gov-reynolds-signs-new-proclamation-continuing-state-public-health-emergency>)

Essential Services

We do not know what will happen in Iowa in the future days. Other states have issued "Sheltered in Place" orders that place significant restrictions on businesses but provides certain exceptions to allow for essential services. In response to the crisis, law firms around the state have arranged to have their work force work remotely to the maximum extent possible. Still, there are some matters that require law firms to have personnel at their offices in order to provide critical law services. The ISBA has submitted a letter to Governor Reynolds requesting that legal services be included on the list of essential services in the event of a Sheltered in Place order in Iowa.

County Recorder Filings

The ISBA became aware that county recorder offices around the state were starting to close their offices for real estate filings. This closure created significant issues for real estate transactions. The ISBA has been working with Iowa Title Guaranty and the Iowa Land Title Association to advocate for relief to allow for real estate filings to continue. In a March 21, 2020, memorandum to Iowa County Auditors, Recorders, and Treasurers, Governor Reynolds strongly encouraged that the offices and full range of vital services provided by these offices be open and accessible to Iowans.

ISBA COVID-19 Resource Webpage

The ISBA is seeking to keep you fully informed of developments relating to the COVID-19 situation. The ISBA webpage to links to important information that we hope is helpful to our members. Please click on the following link to access this information:

<https://www.iowabar.org/page/COVIDResources>

CLE Offerings

The ISBA will continue its CLE offerings exclusively via remote access at least through the end of April.

Judicial Branch

The Iowa Judicial Branch has significantly curtailed activities including postponing civil and criminal trials. The ISBA website maintains a list of all of the Judicial Branch COVID-19 situation directives. We also will keep you updated on any judicial developments as they occur.

Our Communities

Access to Justice is a fundamental right of all Iowans and the COVID-19 crisis has created unexpected challenges. Iowans need help in navigating through this unexplored legal landscape and its emerging legal issues. We are working with Iowa Legal Aid and the Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project to have Iowa lawyers from around state be able to assist on possible hotlines and other matters remotely.

The ISBA also sponsors Free Legal Answers (<https://iowa.freelegalanswers.org/>), which makes available opportunities to provide from your computer short-term, pro bono legal services. Participants can go to the website and pick questions they feel comfortable answering and submit responses through the website. Please check out the site.

We continue strive to support our members. Please let me know if you have any suggestions on what else the ISBA should be doing during this challenging time.

Thank you,

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