

E-SJI NEWS

Update on SJI Grant Programs for FY 2012: Priority Investment Areas

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SJI's solicitation for concept papers dealing with self-represented litigation and the state courts resulted in 47 papers; totaling **\$4,770,208**. Self-represented litigation in the state courts was designated an SJI [Priority Investment Area](#) for FY 2012. Once the Board has awarded grants for selected projects, more details will be provided.

SJI continues to receive over \$1 million in grant applications per quarter., and encourages potential applicants to consider submitting their application as early in the fiscal year as possible. In addition, SJI staff can assist potential applicants in determining whether their proposed projects are eligible within the parameters of SJI's [Grant Guideline](#).

It is important for potential applicants to consider the

timing of applications. While SJI has not previously allocated all grant funding before the 4th quarter of a given fiscal year, increases in quarterly applications, designation of [Priority Investment Areas](#), and potential partner grants at the national level have an impact on available grant funding.

In addition to the requirements contained in the [Grant Guideline](#), applicants are also being asked if their proposed projects advance one or more [Priority Investment Areas](#), and if not, why.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact SJI with any questions. The deadline for 3rd quarter grant applications is May 1, 2012. The deadline for 4th quarter grant applications is August 1, 2012.

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Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse Course Offers New Tribal Practice Section

The National Judicial Education Program (NJEP), a project of [Legal Momentum](#), has been working to update training provided through its popular course, *Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse: Adjudicating This Hidden Dimension of Domestic Violence Cases* (SJI-11-E-154). The course contains 13 modules, case studies, and an array of valuable insights for judicial and legal audiences on this important issue.

The most recent addition to the course is a Tribal Practice section that contains information specific to tribal courts, as provided by the American Indian Law Institute and the University of New Mexico/Southwest Indian Legal Clinic. The [online course](#)



can be accessed free of charge. While SJI did not fund the tribal component of this grant (due to statutory prohibitions), it demonstrates how this course continues to be relevant to a broad judicial audience.

Update on the State Supreme Court Initiative (SSCI)

With the support of the SJI, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and William & Mary Law School's Institute for Bill of Rights Law launched the State Supreme Court Initiative (SSCI) in FY 2010 (SJI-10-N-147). The project began with three initial goals: 1) to study and report on the work and decisions of state supreme courts; 2) to encourage journalists and academics to engage in similar study; and, 3) to provide a new vehicle for public education about the important work of state supreme courts

The primary vehicle through which SSCI is working towards these objectives is a website featuring: 1) a database of detailed information and statistics about state supreme courts and their opinions; and 2) a blog for the state supreme court decisions modeled off the highly successful [SCOTUSblog](#) for U.S. Supreme Court decisions. In the fall of 2010, SSCI convened a task force made up of prominent legal journalists, state supreme court scholars, transparency advocates, clerks, and judges. The task force discussed the shape of the project and plotted strategies to move ahead. At the suggestion of the task force, SSCI undertook a two-month trial last spring during which two William & Mary Law students explored state supreme court information networks and approaches to covering state supreme courts. The students analyzed various aspects of state supreme courts (opinion release schedules, volume, opinion release format, etc.). They also tested how to blog about state supreme court outcomes, getting a sense

of how much time it takes and what resources are needed.

The trial proved to be a great learning experience. Building on this work, a state supreme court “bloginar” course began with a series of lectures on state supreme courts as institutions. Law students have been assigned five state supreme courts to cover. Students are currently blogging weekly about state supreme court outcomes, upcoming cases, and court

composition matters, generating approximately 30 posts per week. In addition, the students are creating profiles with information about the unique history and make up of each state supreme court.

The SSCI will rollout the blog/website and products by the summer of 2012.

SJI Grant Reports Available Online

SJI continues to make all grant reports and most grant products available online through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) [Library](#) and [Digital Archive](#). Potential applicants are encouraged to thoroughly research the online library for reports on their topic area, prior to submitting a grant application to SJI. The NCSC Library and Digital Archive



are two different resources with unique URLs. It is recommended that searches for SJI grant reports and other state court resources begin with the NCSC [Library](#) section.

The NCSC Library also maintains an active Twitter feed with state court updates and additions to the collection.

American Judges Association Features Blog to Promote Judicial Communication

The [American Judges Association](#) (AJA) received a Technical Assistance (TA) grant from SJI in FY 2009 to redesign their website; adding an array of new features and functionality (SJI-09-T-162).

Among the notable additions since the redesign has been the [AJA Blog](#). The blog comments on issues impacting the state courts, suggests relevant readings to expand judicial knowledge and professional perspectives, and provides a forum for readers to respond. Unlike most other blogs available, it is written, published, and managed by a sitting state court judge.

Judge Kevin Burke has been a Minneapolis trial court judge since 1984. Judge Burke coauthored the AJA's white paper on procedural fairness in 2007, and has co-presented on procedural fairness to more than 2,000 state and federal judges. A 2003 recipient of the



William H. Rehnquist Award, he has adapted his talents to his role as the primary AJA blogger.

Websites for state courts and national court support organizations are one of the most readily available resources for judges, court staff, and stakeholders to access timely information as efficiently as possible. SJI has worked with a variety of organizations at the local, state, and national level to improve their website design, content, and capabilities.

In 2007, SJI provided a TA Grant to the New York Unified Court System to develop an

educational website (SJI-07-T-058). In 2010, SJI funded a TA grant to develop distance learning enhancement for the National Association for Court Management (NACM) website (SJI-10-E-159). In 2011, SJI provided Project Grant funding to NCSC's Center for Elders and the Courts to build a multi-functional website to develop and disseminate valuable resources on elder issues (SJI-11-N-177). Currently, SJI is supporting the redesign and enhancement of the Council of Chief Judges of the State Courts of Appeal (CCJSCA) website.

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The State Justice Institute is a federally-funded, non-profit corporation established by federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in the state courts.

