

PRESS RELEASE

Nation's First Interactive Pro Bono Legal Site Based on Tennessee Model

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A ground-breaking interactive pro bono website that is being launched across the country had its roots in Tennessee.

The American Bar Association is in the midst of rolling out ABAFreeLegalAnswers.org, the nation's first interactive pro bono site that will help low income citizens obtain free legal advice. The purpose of the website is to increase access to advice and information about non-criminal legal matters to those who cannot afford it. There is no fee for the use of the system or for the advice and information provided by the lawyer.

The ABA adopted the Tennessee model for this national online legal advice platform after seeing the success of TN.FreeLegalAnswers.org, previously known as OnlineTNJustice.org. A joint project of the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services and Tennessee Bar Association, TN.FreeLegalAnswers.org allows Tennesseans to seek free legal advice from volunteer lawyers. Since the website's launch in 2011, it has handled more than 12,500 questions with the assistance of 500 lawyer volunteers.

In 2015, the ABA decided to establish a national online legal advice platform using the Tennessee model, which was the first statewide resource of its type in the country. Currently more than 40 states across the country have signed up to participate in ABAFreeLegalAnswers.org.

George T. "Buck" Lewis, chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, notes the impact that these interactive websites can have in helping low income citizens. "In Tennessee alone, we've seen how these online services can help thousands of people who need legal assistance but can't afford a lawyer," Mr. Lewis said. "Magnify that impact across more than 40 states and cities, and you have a very powerful tool for providing timely and critical help to low income people across the nation."

[Mr. Lewis](#), a shareholder in the Memphis office of Baker Donelson, is past chair of the Tennessee Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission and past president of the Tennessee Bar Association. Mr. Lewis was instrumental in spearheading the development of the Tennessee site, which runs on software created and donated by the IT department of Baker Donelson. Baker Donelson has continued to provide support during the development of the national site.