



# GREATER BOSTON LEGAL SERVICES

... and justice for all

# NEWS

Spring/Summer

2010

## GBLS Works to Maintain Client Services and Save Jobs in Midst of Funding Crisis

Since July 2008, GBLS has been dealing with a severe financial crisis.

GBLS' annual funding from the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) was cut by \$2 million in the middle of its grant year due to the sharp decline in Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) income (one of MLAC's two principal sources of revenue). In response, GBLS has been increasing its already substantial fundraising efforts, making cuts in non-essential non-personnel costs, implemented a staff furlough program which resulted in reduced wages, and froze 2010 salaries at the reduced 2009 levels.

Throughout 2009, GBLS used its reserves to keep client services at the highest level possible despite significant deficits, and its aggressive fundraising resulted in preserving 10 positions for 2010.

Despite these efforts, GBLS had no choice but to reduce its permanent program-wide staff by 15 positions through voluntary lay-offs, early retirements, and attrition. All units cut staff with the exception of the Housing Law Unit, which had received funding from the Oak Foundation to preserve for one year four attorney positions that would otherwise have been cut. Ten *pro bono*, deferred associates from Boston law firms, who are working full-time as staff attorneys (most for a 12-month period), are helping to mitigate the impact of the voluntary lay-offs.

***GBLS had no choice but to reduce its permanent program-wide staff...***

This year, GBLS is spending down most of its remaining reserves and continuing its fundraising efforts. Unfortunately, additional non-personnel cuts and further significant reductions of staff will have to be undertaken to enable GBLS to address the significant 2011 projected deficit, which reserves cannot cover. GBLS is very grateful to Governor Patrick for level funding legal services (line item 0321-1600) in his FY2011 state budget. If funding is ultimately reduced in the final version of the budget, even greater staff reductions and a decrease in client services are likely.

Despite this crisis, GBLS staff continue to do extraordinary work on behalf of thousands of vulnerable Massachusetts residents. The following stories provide a glimpse of this work.

**Greater Boston Legal Services is the primary provider of free civil legal assistance to poor people living in the City of Boston and 31 surrounding cities and towns.**

**Visit us on the web:**

**[www.gbls.org](http://www.gbls.org)**

## ***This Issue...***

<i>Domestic Abuse Survivor Story</i> . . . . .	2
<i>Welcome Back, Bob Sable</i> . . . . .	2
<i>Paid Sick Day Legislation Event</i> . . . . .	3
<i>Preserving Affordable Housing</i> . . . . .	3
<i>Kudos!</i> . . . . .	4

### **Temporary Protected Status Clinic**



Immigration Law Unit attorney Jerry Wall and law student intern Audrey Robert Ramirez assisted a Haitian client at a GBLS Temporary Protected Status (TPS) clinic in March 2010. GBLS set up a weekly clinic following the devastating earthquake in Haiti to assist Haitians in the Boston area.  
*Photo by Linda Lank*

# GBLS' Approach to Helping Clients: One Domestic Violence Survivor's Story

A major problem in GBLS clients' lives can have a cascading effect and create other serious issues for which legal assistance is needed in order to stabilize the clients' lives.

For example, victims of domestic violence often face a host of problems when fleeing their abusers; legal assistance is imperative to help them resolve these issues that impact their ability to build a new life.

Take the situation "Kayla" and her family faced. A top-notch college student, she had been elected Phi Beta Kappa. Unfortunately, due to domestic violence Kayla had to flee Western Massachusetts a semester shy of graduating from college. The trauma she and her 3 sons suffered included physical and sexual abuse of both herself and 2 of her sons, which resulted in significant trauma-related disabilities. In search of safety, she turned to the domestic violence shelter network while she searched for permanent housing. Her extended journey eventually led Kayla and her children to residing at Casa Myrna Vazquez, a Boston domestic violence shelter. There she was referred to Greater Boston Legal Services. Her GBLS attorney,

working with the staff at Casa Myrna, helped Kayla get priority for permanent housing. Unfortunately, her problems did not end there.

When Kayla's family moved into their first apartment, Verizon gave the address to Kayla's abuser and the family had to move again. When Kayla found a job, the Division of Transitional Assistance (DTA) inappropriately denied her the child care she needed while she worked. With the intervention of a GBLS attorney who proved that the DTA denial was wrong, Kayla was able to receive the needed child care. Another GBLS attorney also helped her children obtain Social Security

Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits as a result of the trauma they had suffered. In addition, GBLS assisted Kayla with re-certifying for her Section 8 voucher, with safety planning issues, and responding to various issues involving the SSDI benefits.

The good news is that once stabilized and several years after interrupting her education, Kayla not only got her B.A. from the College of Public and Community Service at UMass, but was also honored with the Dean's Award for demonstrating outstanding academic skill. Her family is now residing in Brookline, where the boys have excelled academically and each of the family members is getting mental health care to deal with the extensive trauma they suffered.



*...legal assistance is imperative to help them resolve these issues that impact their ability to build a new life.*

## Welcome back, Bob Sable, and thank you, Jacqui Bowman!



GBLS' Executive Director Bob Sable returned to the office in March 2010 after a 5-month, unexpected medical leave. While he remained connected and very much engaged in the organization during those months, early on he and the Board of Directors asked Associate Director Jacquelynne Bowman to serve as Acting Director. Jacqui provided extraordinary leadership and a seamless transition, working in partnership with Litigation Director Dan Manning, Associate Director for Finance and Development Jack Ward, and Human Resources Director Sonia Marquez. Many thanks to Jacqui as well as to Dan, Jack, and Sonia for steering GBLS so well during a difficult period, and welcome back, Bob!

Deputy Director Jacquelynne Bowman served as Acting Executive Director during Executive Director Bob Sable's unexpected medical leave.  
Photo by Linda Lank

# Outstanding Support for Paid Sick Days Legislation at State House Event

Ellen Wallace, GBLS Employment Law Unit attorney, assisted by GBLS attorney and deferred Goodwin Procter associate Radhika Bhattacharya and other staff and students, coordinated a very successful event at the State House in support of paid sick days legislation. Because Senator Ted Kennedy cared so much about this issue, Victoria Reggie Kennedy came and spoke in favor of the Paid Sick Days Act along with Lilly Ledbetter, crusader for fairness at work and of the Lilly Ledbetter Act fame. Governor Deval Patrick and Angela Menino, the wife of Boston Mayor Menino, also attended and strongly endorsed the bill. The event added momentum to this bill's passage. GBLS, along with its Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition partners, has been advocating for paid sick days on behalf of client groups New England United 4 Justice and the Coalition Against Poverty.

The Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition is comprised of over seventy community, business, and labor organizations and promotes work/family balance through its advocacy on this state bill that will provide paid sick days for all Massachusetts workers. Since women are still the primary caretakers of their families, a lack of paid sick days is another way in which women are paid less, or worse, lose their jobs, jeopardizing any chance for economic security.



The April 1, 2010 event at the State House in support of paid sick days was a huge success. From l-r: Barbara Gutman, Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action; GBLS Lead Attorney Monica Halas; Lily Ledbetter; GBLS Senior Attorney Ellen Wallace; and GBLS Attorney Radhika Bhattacharya

*Photo by Darrell Villaruz, office of state Representative Kay Khan*



Victoria Reggie Kennedy and GBLS Lead Attorney Monica Halas  
*Photo by Darrell Villaruz, office of state Representative Kay Khan*

## GBLS Plays Key Role in Passage of Law Preserving Affordable Housing in Massachusetts

GBLS attorneys drafted the language of an affordable housing bill that was recently signed into law. On November 30, 2009 Governor Patrick signed **"An Act Preserving Publicly Assisted Housing"**. It will provide a critical tool to help preserve thousands of units of low-income housing by allowing the state to purchase affordable housing before its subsidy expires. GBLS attorneys took a leadership

role by representing local community organizations in drafting the legislation as part of a coalition of Massachusetts agencies and community and advocacy groups that worked tirelessly on this legislation.

This new bill will positively affect the lives of thousands of families and individuals, including many who are elderly or disabled across the Commonwealth. Prior to pas-

sage of this bill, each year Massachusetts would lose thousands of units of previously-created affordable housing to the private market. Families lost the chance to live in safe areas of the city where there are good schools and access to public transportation and were forced to find private housing wherever it was available, often in poorly-maintained housing in deteriorated neighborhoods.

**Please Donate. Donate. Donate.**

Make a donation online to help support our services to clients. Visit us at [www.gbls.org](http://www.gbls.org) and click on DONATE.

## Kudos!

**Nadine Cohen**, Consumer Rights Unit Managing Attorney, and **James “Mac” McCreight**, Housing Law Unit Lead Attorney, were honored for their work by the Committee for Boston Public Housing. They received the Edna P. Bynoe Legacy Award and citations from the Governor, State Representative Gloria Fox, and Boston City Councilors Chuck Turner, Charles Yancey, and Sam Yoon.

**Sherley Cruz**, Employment Law Unit Attorney, was selected to serve a second term on the Massachusetts Bar Association’s Labor and Employment Section Council. She is the co-chair of the section’s *Pro Bono* Committee. Attorney Cruz was also re-elected secretary of the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys.

**Monica Halas**, Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney, was given a Northeastern School of Law Daynard Public Interest Fellowship. The Daynard Public Interest Visiting Fellows Program selects just two public interest practitioners each academic year to “serve as role models for students, demonstrating how legal skills can be used effectively and creatively to make the world a better place.” Attorney Halas was also named an AM 1510 Revolution Boston hero, for her efforts on behalf of low-income workers illegally denied wages and unemployment compensation (UI) and for advocating for systemic changes to the UI system.

**Nancy Kelly**, Immigration Law Unit Acting Managing Attorney; **Pauline Quirion**, Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney; and **John Willshire Carrera**, Immigration Law Unit Lead Attorney, were selected as Massachusetts 2009 Super Lawyers by Super Lawyers magazine.

**Pauline Quirion**, Employment Law Unit Lead Attorney, received a Woman of Justice award from Massachusetts Lawyer Weekly. She was also honored at the annual meeting of Middlesex District Attorney Gerald Leone for her work as a mentor, trainer, and supporter of the D.A.’s 2009 *Pro Bono* panel.

**GBLS’ Cambridge and Somerville office** (Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services) received the Somerville Human Rights Commission 2010 MLK Jr. Day Award. Staff was honored for promoting economic justice by improving access to safe and affordable housing, food, health care, and income supports.

Recently, CASLS initiated a joint outreach project with the Community Action Agency of Somerville to inform tenants and owners in Somerville properties in the process of foreclosure of their right to stay in their homes using the courts and other remedies.

**GBLS’ Employment Law Unit** received a Collaborative Action for Safety Award for its work on the Temp Worker Right to Know campaign from the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH).



197 Friend Street  
Boston, MA 02114  
617.371.1234  
www.gbbs.org



Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
Permit #54162  
Boston, MA