

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Three National Bar Presidents Issue Unified Call For Judicial Funding

Chicago – (March 4, 2013)— The respective leaders of the American Association for Justice, the American Bar Association, and DRI — The Voice of the Defense Bar warned in a joint statement released today that imminent budget cuts through sequestration will impinge access to justice at the state and federal levels and put court petitioners, staff and judges in harm’s way.

“The federal judiciary and every individual and business that depends on our courts will bear the burden for congressional deadlock through costly delays” said the presidents of the three justice organizations.

“The unity of our three organizations, the major bar organizations in the United State, indicates the true seriousness of the threat to timely access to justice for individuals and businesses,” said DRI president Massaron Ross.

The three presidents warned that sequestration is doubly troubling for state courts, which have “endured years of withering cuts despite overwhelming caseloads.”

Additionally, recent gun violence on court grounds across the country — including Alabama, Delaware, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas — is a chilling reminder of the life-and-death importance of courthouse safety. “Yet sequestration will leave federal court security positions unfunded” and also reduce the pool of available resources at the state level, according to the legal organizations.

The three presidents closed by appealing to policymakers to provide adequate funding for federal and state judiciaries.

“Access to justice is a promise that would be too costly for our country to deny.”

The statement is signed by DRI president Mary Massaron Ross, ABA president Lauren Bellows, and AAJ president Mary Alice McLarty.

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About DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar

For more than fifty years, DRI has been the voice of the defense bar, advocating for 22,000 defense attorneys, commercial trial attorneys, and corporate counsel and defending the integrity of the civil

judiciary. A thought leader, DRI provides world-class legal education, deep expertise for policy-makers, legal resources, and networking opportunities to facilitate career and law firm growth. For more information, log on to www.dri.org

A Unified Call for Adequate Funding for Federal and State Judiciaries

Severe and indiscriminate federal court budget reductions through sequestration combined with chronically anemic state funding for courts threaten access to justice for every American and put court petitioners, staff and judges in physical jeopardy.

The failure of leaders in Washington, D.C., to agree on a deficit reduction plan has triggered across-the-board cuts to essential government functions. The federal judiciary and every individual and business that depends on our courts will bear the burden for congressional deadlock through costly delays.

State courts have endured years of withering cuts despite overwhelming caseloads. As most states devote a shrinking fraction of their annual budgets to courts, communities increasingly discover that their courthouses are closed when they most need judicial remedy.

In recent weeks, our nation has seen a spate of gun violence on court grounds in Alabama, Delaware, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas. Yet sequestration will leave federal court security positions unfunded. State courts are already hamstrung from local budget woes and the projected shortfalls from sequestration will likely mean even fewer resources for state judicial systems.

Our organizations — the American Association for Justice, the American Bar Association and DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar— representing a concerned legal community, call on policymakers on Capitol Hill and statehouses across the country to provide adequate funding for our federal and state judiciaries. Access to justice is a promise that would be too costly for our country to deny.

President Mary Alice McLarty, American Association for Justice

President Laurel Bellows, American Bar Association

President Mary Massaron Ross, DRI-Voice of the Defense Bar