

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services
50th Anniversary Year Exhibit



Celebrating Fifty Years of
Fighting for Fairness for Vulnerable People
November 1967- October 2018



Hurricane Katrina and its Aftermath

(2005-2010)

Hurricane Katrina was the biggest crisis in SLLS' history. 60% of staff lost their homes with 100% displaced six weeks or more. 1/3 never returned. The New Orleans SLLS office was out of commission for 10 weeks. The Chalmette office was destroyed. Within days of the storm, SLLS opened a disaster hotline and temporary office run by six displaced SLLS staff stationed at Legal Services of North Louisiana.



Pictured Left to Right - Mark Moreau, SLLS Co-Executive Director, Maritza Katz, Staff Attorney, and Brian Lenard, SLLS Co-Executive Director mucking out flooded Chalmette office

70% of homes and businesses in New Orleans received severe damage with hundreds of thousands of residents evacuated or made homeless. Through the generosity of the private bar, law schools, students, foundations, and the general public, resources to help meet swelling legal needs were available. Then Co-Executive Director Mark Moreau said, "It was our darkest, yet finest hour." For its sustained record of excellence after Katrina, SLLS received an ABA Hodsen Award. It was the only civil legal aid program to receive a special award from HUD for its post-Katrina housing advocacy work.

How the Work Emerged

Highlights of Katrina Related Impact Work



SLLS corrected a problem on a national scale - the Disaster Housing Assistance Program included food stamps as income when setting rents. SLLS advocacy with HUD fixed the problem for 31,000 people with an estimated benefit of \$10 million.

A HUD landlord displaced 300 families to charge higher rent. SLLS advocated with HUD to get it to approve Tenant Protection Vouchers and relocation assistance to them plus an additional 1,500 families from 12 more HUD developments. The value of this was \$5 million annually.

HUD stopped rent assistance to more than 600 families suspected of getting duplicate housing benefits. SLLS persuaded HUD to reinstate rent checks. Further investigation contradicted the initial assessment. Most were found not to be "double dipping".

SLLS helped over 1,500 disaster-impacted homeowners obtain over \$72 million in Road Home recovery funding by clearing title to informally passed down heir property. From 2007-2008, SLLS alone performed 26% of all title clearing work done by all LSC programs.

SLLS handled more than 1,100 FEMA claims obtaining over \$8 million in FEMA recovery funding to help stabilize their lives.