

## **Supreme Judicial Court Adopts Access to Justice Fee**

On June 29, 2010, the Supreme Judicial Court amended their Rule 4:03, adding \$51.00 per year to the Board of Bar Overseers registration fee. This "Access to Justice Fee" is to be used "in the administration of justice and provision of civil legal services to those who cannot afford them."

Any lawyer may choose not to pay the Access to Justice fee without penalty. However, attorneys are reminded that the generosity and support of the legal community helps fill the civil legal aid funding gap and ensure access to justice for the neediest in our communities. With close to one million people in Massachusetts eligible for free legal assistance, there is a huge unmet need for services. This need has been amplified by the current recession, which has resulted in rising unemployment, increasing domestic violence and the ongoing foreclosure crisis.

The role of Massachusetts attorneys in supporting access to justice is a source of justifiable pride for the legal profession. The Access to Justice fee will appear on registration materials mailed beginning in September, 2010. Funds from the Access to Justice fee will be administered by the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts program and will be distributed through the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, the Massachusetts Bar Foundation and the Boston Bar Foundation.

For further questions on the Access to Justice Fee, please contact the IOLTA Committee at: 617-723-9093