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**ORANGE COUNTY BAR TALKS TO 350 FAMILY MEMBERS AND
VICTIMS OF MASS SHOOTING IN ORLANDO**

ORLANDO, FL... On June 14, 2016, the Orange County Bar Association (OCBA) in Orlando, Florida, in conjunction with the Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association, Inc., launched a Victims' Legal Assistance hotline to provide immediate as well as long-term referrals to pro bono attorneys for family members and victims of the mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando on Sunday, June 12, 2016.

The OCBA issued an area-wide appeal – which soon went national – for attorneys to provide pro bono services to victims and their families. To date, 300 attorneys from throughout Florida and the nation have joined the OCBA's Victims' Legal Assistance Program panel and are taking referrals.

OCBA president Wiley S. Boston, Esq., a partner at Holland & Knight, LLP, says the massive outpouring of support for the OCBA's outreach to victims and families demonstrates what it is that makes the Orange County Bar Association special.

For eight days, from June 15 through 22, the OCBA and Legal Aid Society staffed tables at the city of Orlando's Family Assistance Center, a partnership of federal, state, local and community agencies, which was set up to allow those directly affected by the tragedy to obtain information about everything

from transportation, lodging, and mental health services to identification documents, funeral service information, and legal services.

At the center, OCBA and Legal Aid representatives met with more than 350 victims and family members, gathered information, and relayed details to the hotline call center for immediate referral. The hotline number was also given to victims who were still hospitalized to let them or their families know about the availability of free legal services. During the first week, requests for legal assistance have focused on probate, immigration, landlord/tenant, workers' compensation and employment, real property, family law, and victims' compensation issues. Most victims or families are dealing with more than one legal issue. To date, the OCBA has made approximately 120 referrals.

The OCBA's hotline will remain open indefinitely as victims become aware of legal matters they may need to address in the future.

Many of Central Florida's voluntary bars and legal aid organizations statewide have provided attorneys for the Victims' Legal Assistance Program panel, including the Central Florida Gay and Lesbian Law Association; Hispanic Bar Association of Central Florida; Central Florida Association for Women Lawyers; Paul C. Perkins Bar Association; Federal Bar Association; and Greater Orlando Asian American Bar Association. Support has poured in from law firms and in-house counsel from throughout the region and the country.

Support has extended beyond the immediate area. The Florida Bar, The Florida Bar Foundation, and the Real Property, Probate & Trust Law Section of The Florida Bar; Florida Justice Association; Florida Immigrant Coalition; and virtually every Florida county bar have contacted their members and provided them the pro bono attorney panel sign-up form.

On a national scale, the LGBT Bar and the Human Rights Campaign and Human Rights Campaign Foundation, both based in Washington, D.C., and the American Justice Association, as well as the New York State Bar, Indianapolis Bar, Long Beach Bar in California, and numerous state bar associations also have actively engaged their members and constituents in the process of providing resources and attorneys for the OCBA's Victims' Legal Assistance Program.

Law students from the Florida A&M University College of Law’s Stonewall LGBT Student Association and local paralegal groups have offered to help in any way possible. Offers of support from other bar associations and law-related organizations continue to come in on a daily basis.

In response to international attention, Boston received a letter from Frédéric Sicard, president, and Dominique Attias, vice-president of the Paris Bar, France. They offered condolences to the families and the community, expressed their support of the OCBA, and affirmed their solidarity with the citizens of the United States.

Boston notes that “the darkness and despair engendered by this incident are to some degree offset by the wonderful response we have received from our membership, from affiliate bar associations, from lawyers and law firms all over Florida, and from around the country and the world.” The OCBA extends its “thoughts and prayers to the victims and their families, and its thanks to the first responders and to all of those who have since stepped in to light up the darkness.”

For updates, or to speak with an OCBA representative, please call 407-422-4551.

The Orange County Bar Association, founded in 1933, is a voluntary professional association comprised of 3,400 judges, attorneys, and other legal professionals. The bar is dedicated to serving the needs of its members and the community through a wide variety of education and outreach programs, including the Legal Aid Society of the OCBA, Inc., and the OCBA Foundation, Inc.

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