



**ILLINOIS STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION**

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Chicago Attorney to Receive Award for Battling Bias

Chicago attorney Ann Hilton Fisher, who has devoted the past 15 years of her legal career to fighting for the rights of people with HIV and AIDS, will receive the 2009 Community Leadership Award from the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) on Friday, June 26, during the organization's 133rd Annual Meeting in Fontana, Wis.

Given by the ISBA's Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI), the honor recognizes individuals for efforts to foster understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and their issues of concern.

A 60-year-old married suburban mother, Fisher graduated from Wayne State University Law School in 1977. After clerking in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, she joined the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago as a neighborhood lawyer and for 17 years was senior attorney of its Disability Law Project.

In 1994, Fisher became supervisor of the foundation's HIV/AIDS Law Project. Three years later, she joined the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago (ALCC) and became its innovative leader and articulate advocate for afflicted clients.

"Ann has committed herself to working to lessen the stigma against LGBT communities," said ALCC case manager Justin Hayford, "because our society's intolerance toward people with HIV grows directly from its animus against gays, lesbians and other sexual minorities." Hayford and other nominators pointed to Fisher's campaign of support for Illinois House Bill 3872. When signed into law in 2000, it raised Medicaid eligibility for HIV-positive people from 41 percent to 100 percent of the federal poverty guideline.

Supporting letters for the ISBA award included one from a 77-year-old gay man who was HIV-positive, alone, insolvent and unaware of his legal entitlements. "Ms. Fisher's concern, patience, compassion and the confidence that she inspired immediately impressed and comforted me," he wrote.

Under Fisher's leadership, the ALCC has been able to double its annual budget, increase its legal staff from four to nine, and expand services to almost 1,500 clients each year. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, she handles a full caseload and chairs a service provider advocacy committee of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. She is past board president of Illinois Citizens for Better Care.

The 35,000-member ISBA, with offices in Springfield and Chicago, provides professional services to Illinois lawyers, and education and services to the public.

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