

MBA NEWS



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MBA votes to support landmark alimony reform bill

The Alimony Reform Act of 2011 will set time limits on alimony

BOSTON, Mass. — The Massachusetts Bar Association has voted to support The Alimony Reform Act of 2011, landmark legislation that will enact fair and equitable alimony in Massachusetts. The MBA, a long-time proponent of improving the state's alimony laws, will advocate for the passage of the act, which will bring long-sought time limits on alimony orders.

The bill was crafted by the Legislative Task Force on Alimony Reform created by the Joint Committee on the Judiciary under the leadership of Sen. Cynthia S. Creem and Rep. Eugene L. O'Flaherty. MBA President Denise Squillante was both a member of the task force and co-chair of an earlier committee of MBA and Boston Bar Association leaders that issued a report on alimony reform in the spring of 2009.

“There is a critical need for more consistent and predictable alimony orders in Massachusetts,” said Squillante, who operates a family law practice in Fall River. “Families who may need alimony, or who may be affected by alimony judgments, deserve clear, statewide guidelines. Without such standards, deciding alimony will remain far too complex and emotionally-charged.”

The MBA's House of Delegates voted unanimously to support The Alimony Reform Act of 2011 at its Thursday, Jan. 20 meeting at the DCU Center in Worcester. The MBA's Family Law Section has closely monitored the topic of alimony since the early 1990s, and has in the past filed a series of proposed legislation to improve alimony laws.

Among its provisions, the 2011 legislation recommends:

- Establishing separate alimony categories with clear definitions and set limits on duration;
- Opportunities to terminate alimony at retirement;
- Altering alimony when ex-spouses cohabit with new partners;
- Adding factors to consider in an alimony order; and
- Allowing judicial discretion to deviate based upon particular case facts

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.