

VBA LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Vermont Bar Association (“VBA”) promotes the highest standards of skill, ethics, and professionalism within an inclusive legal profession; fosters understanding and respect for the rule of law; supports equal access to a fair and effective system of justice; and provides valuable resources to its members. The VBA Loan Repayment Assistance Program (“LRAP”) provides loan assistance for licensed attorney members of the Vermont Bar Association. The program is designed to assist attorneys burdened by student loan debt so they can continue to work in Vermont serving Vermonters in underserved geographic and subject areas.

The VBA-LRAP provides assistance to applicants who might otherwise be precluded or overly burdened from practicing in Vermont because of salaries that do not support their student loan burden.

I. Eligibility

- a. License- Participants must be licensed to practice law in the State of Vermont
- b. Bar membership- Participants must be members of the Vermont Bar Association
[VBA Attorney Membership Application](#)
- c. Financial eligibility- income or salary from legal work of \$75,000 or less.
- d. Student loan debt- combined undergraduate and graduate law school loans of at least \$25,000.

II. Priority given to the following applicants:

- a. Practice in underserved geographic areas of Vermont, including the Northeast Kingdom, Grand Isle/Franklin, Windham, and Orange counties.
- b. Practice or focus in underserved legal areas or areas that serve vulnerable and working people in Vermont, including family law, criminal defense, estate planning, disability, social security, unemployment, workers’ compensation, small business, consumer protection, housing, mental health access, and guardianship.

II. Other factors considered when evaluating applicants:

Participation in other loan forgiveness programs and amount of relief/forgiveness.

IV. Assistance/Award

A maximum amount of \$5,000 per year may be awarded to each approved participant. Loan assistance shall be paid twice a year directly to the participant on a prospective basis. The number and amount of awards shall be determined by and at the discretion of the Loan Repayment Assistance Program Committee (“LRAP Committee”) of the Vermont Bar Association.

V. Application and Verification Procedure

Applications must be completed with the required documentation and submitted to the Vermont Bar Association by the deadline for consideration. The VBA-LRAP Committee will review and decide eligibility and amounts of assistance. All information submitted through the application process will remain confidential.

If an award is granted, the recipient shall submit documentation regarding employment and proof of loan payments every six months in compliance with the conditions and deadlines in the award letter.

Any status changes shall be reported immediately by the recipient to the VBA-LRAP Committee.

VI. Notification to Applicants

All applicants will be notified of the results of their application.

VII. Award Disbursement to Recipients

VBA-LRAP awards must be used by the recipient to pay educational loan debt. Awards will be disbursed in the form of a check equaling one-half of the total annual award amount. To receive a second check, the recipient must provide proof of educational loan payments equaling half of the annual award amount during the first six months of the award cycle. Program assistance will be no more than the amount of loan repayment paid by the participant.

VIII. Eligibility Changes

Recipient’s income or salary from legal work exceeds \$75,000 during award cycle.

If a recipient’s income from legal work increases to more than \$75,000 during an award cycle, the recipient shall remain eligible for assistance during that award cycle and there will be no change in the award amount.

Recipient terminates employment in Vermont or for Vermont clients.

Recipients relinquish their Vermont license or are no longer in good standing.

IX. Termination

An award shall terminate when a recipient terminates employment in Vermont or for Vermonters. Participants that terminate such employment during an award cycle shall re-pay any award on a pro-rata basis.

X. Federal Income Tax Liability

The recipient remains solely responsible for any federal, state, or local income tax liability he, she, or they may incur as a result of the VBA-LRAP award. We encourage recipients to consult with a qualified tax professional.

XI. VBA-LRAP Committee

The Committee shall be comprised of the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director of the VBA, two members of the VBA Executive Committee, and two members of the Workforce Development Committee.

XII. Contact information

All inquiries and correspondence about the program, including application procedures and deadlines should be directed to:

Robert Paolini
Executive Director
Vermont Bar Association
PO Box 100,
Montpelier, VT 05601-0100
bpaolini@vtbar.org