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**Marquette Law School to run Foreclosure Mediation Program with
funding from Wisconsin Attorney General
City of Milwaukee funding already approved**

Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen announced today, with Mayor Tom Barrett and Marquette University Law School Dean Joseph D. Kearney, \$310,000 in funding for Marquette University Law School to implement the Milwaukee Foreclosure Mediation Program, which will provide mediation between lenders and residential borrowers facing foreclosure. The funding results from the proceeds of the successful Countrywide Financial Corporation lawsuit. In addition, the City of Milwaukee recently approved \$100,000 in funding for the same effort.

The Milwaukee Foreclosure Mediation program will be a voluntary, court-based independent mediation option for lenders and borrowers. The program, located at the Milwaukee County Courthouse, will seek to alleviate the current backlog of foreclosure cases in the county court system by offering the option of mediation to residential homeowners who reside in owner-occupied properties. Borrowers will be screened to ensure there is some possibility of a successful outcome of the mediation process. According to the Law School, in most cases, successful mediation will serve as a venue to work out new loan terms, a short sale, or other solution that is mutually agreeable, and execute a final agreement between the parties.

“Our success in the Countrywide matter has made this possible. At the Mayor’s request and in concert with the Marquette University Law School and the Milwaukee Foreclosure Partnership Initiative, Countrywide proceeds can be put to work- as the court ordered them to be - mediating potential home foreclosures,” Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen said. “My decision to fund the Milwaukee Foreclosure Mediation Program is based on Marquette’s reputation for dispute resolution and the likelihood that this effort can expand statewide with their efforts,” the Attorney General went on.

“As well, of particular concern to me are the significant public safety concerns related to foreclosed and abandoned properties in Milwaukee,” he concluded.

Mayor Tom Barrett gratefully accepted the funds. “We’re pleased these proceeds can be used to benefit an important recommendation of the Milwaukee Foreclosure Partnership Initiative. The Milwaukee Foreclosure Mediation Program is a critical part of the partnership’s intervention approach and will serve those in need and the City very well,” Barrett said.

Marquette Law School Dean Joseph D. Kearney noted, “As a national leader in the field of dispute resolution, Marquette Law School is almost uniquely suited to the task of guiding an impartial foreclosure-mediation program. This state funding, along with the funding already approved by the City of Milwaukee, will enable us to help citizens preserve housing assets and retain homeownership where feasible, to return a steady mortgage payment to lenders, and to relieve the court dockets.”

The Law School will hire a trained chief mediator to lead mediation efforts, in addition to another full-time position providing administrative support. The chief mediator and Law School faculty, together with an advisory board, will work to recruit other qualified attorneys to volunteer their time toward the effort. Law students will provide supervised volunteer assistance in the form of research, case management and other mediation-related activities.

The Attorney General has directed up to \$310,000 to this Milwaukee effort with the express desire the program resources become available statewide. Additional funds may be made available to Marquette University to support expansion of the program to other parts of the state. Attorney General Van Hollen today appointed Assistant Attorney General Nelle Rohlich as a Special Assistant Attorney General for Mortgage Foreclosure Mitigation. She will serve as the department’s point-person for efforts statewide.

Beginning May 28, an informational phone line will be operational for those interested in learning more about the program. Interested parties may call 414-288-4040. Mediation activities will begin after July 1.

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