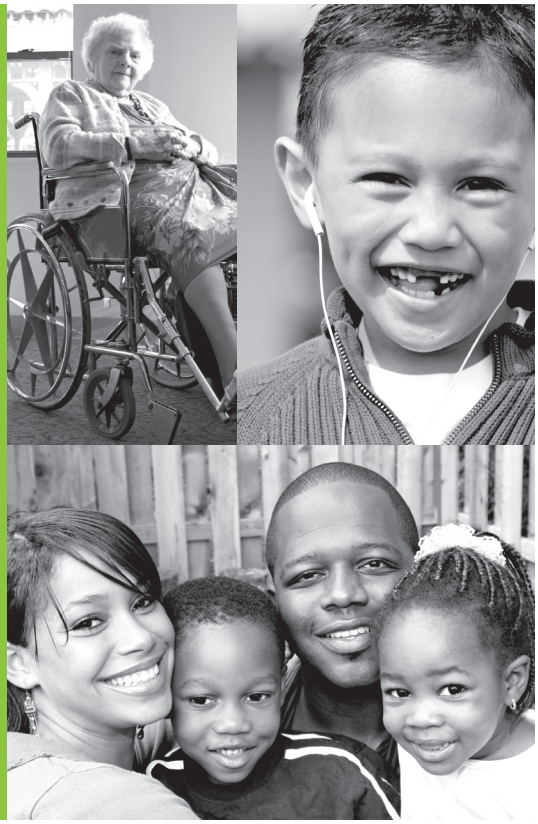
Support the new Justice Gap Fund!

Your opportunity to help low-income Californians receive legal assistance.



WHY DO WE NEED THE JUSTICE GAP FUND?

The *Justice Gap Fund* will assist thousands of low-income Californians who face serious legal problems and cannot afford legal help.

- Nationally, 50 percent of all potential legal aid clients are turned away due to a lack of resources;
- In California, there are over 8,000 low-income persons per legal aid lawyer.
- California lags far behind many other states, and ranks 22nd in terms of amount of legal services funding per poor person;
- Only one third of our low-income population receives any help for their legal problems, and those individuals often receive only part of the legal help they actually need.

Through the new *Justice Gap Fund,* lawyers across the state will be able to contribute to one efficient central Fund so that legal aid programs have the resources they need to fulfill their mission -- to provide legal assistance to those who desperately need their help.

Addressing the justice gap is not a partisan issue. It is the promise of our Pledge of Allegiance that we are a nation of "liberty and justice for all."

Assembly Member Dave Jones "After the Applause, Action Needed to Close the Justice Gap in California" California Progress Report, March 8, 2007

Elder safe from fraud

Mr. Davis, an elderly widower with health issues had taken out a high-interest loan to pay for the repairs his "friend" the contractor was supposed to do. Playing on their supposed friendship, the contractor not only grossly overcharged him for the work, but also ran up $15,000 on Mr. Davis' credit card. When Mr. Davis went to legal aid he was $60,000 in debt. On a fixed income of Social Security and a modest union pension, he couldn't make the house payments and was in danger of losing his home of 30 years. Legal aid staff identified the all-too-common scam by operators who prey on senior citizens to swindle them out of the equity in their homes. Legal aid sued to cancel one of the loans and had the other one reduced. Mr. Davis also got his credit card debt eliminated. His home was saved.

"If the motto 'and justice for all' becomes 'and justice for those who can afford it,' we threaten the very underpinnings of our social contract."

California Chief Justice Ronald M. George
State of the Judiciary speech 2001

WHAT IS THE JUSTICE GAP FUND?

The *Fund* implements Assembly Bill 2301, signed by the Governor in August of 2006. This new law authorizes the State Bar to collect contributions from its members to support legal assistance for low-income Californians, in order to bridge the "justice gap":

- Contributions are voluntary and encouraged from all California lawyers, with a suggested contribution of $100;
- Contributions can be made annually through the member fee statement or any day of the year through the State Bar's website;
- The *Justice Gap Fund* will take advantage of the existing network of local legal aid programs to provide services efficiently and effectively;
- Contributions are tax-exempt to the full extent of the law.

WHAT WILL THE JUSTICE GAP FUND DO?

The new fund will provide legal assistance to the most vulnerable Californians, including:

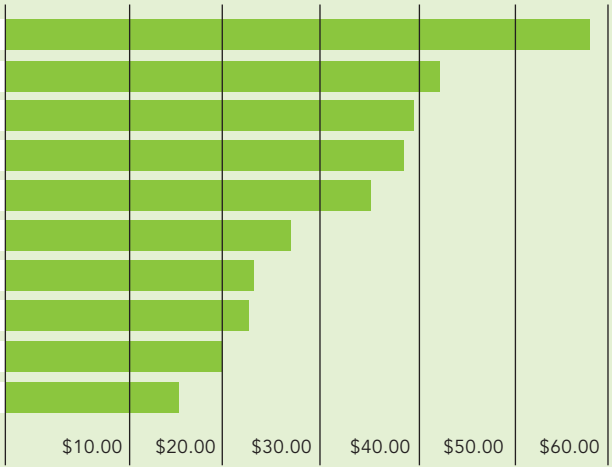
- Protecting victims of elder abuse and domestic violence;
- Keeping families intact by avoiding homelessness and establishing guardianships;
- Helping low-income children access health care and special education services.

The services will be provided by approximately 100 legal aid programs that have a long history of providing legal services and are already approved recipients of the State Bar's Legal Services Trust Fund Program.

Legal aid is a critical component of the justice system, helping improve trust and confidence in the court system, and the Fund will help ensure that more low-income Californians get their day in court.

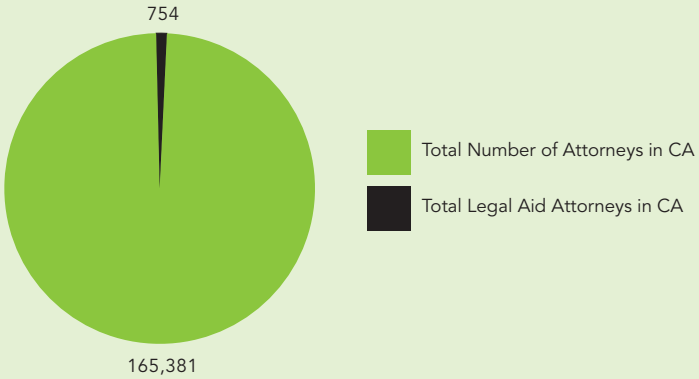
Civil Legal Services for the Indigent – Government Spending per Eligible Poor Person – FY 2005

State	Govt. Spending
New Jersey	$57.00
Minnesota	$43.15
Massachusetts	$39.64
Connecticut	$38.98
Maryland	$35.86
Washington	$26.53
New York	$23.53
Ohio	$23.30
Pennsylvania	$20.14
California	$16.25



Source: American Bar Association's Project to Expand Resources for Legal Services, the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems, and U.S. Bureau of the Census.

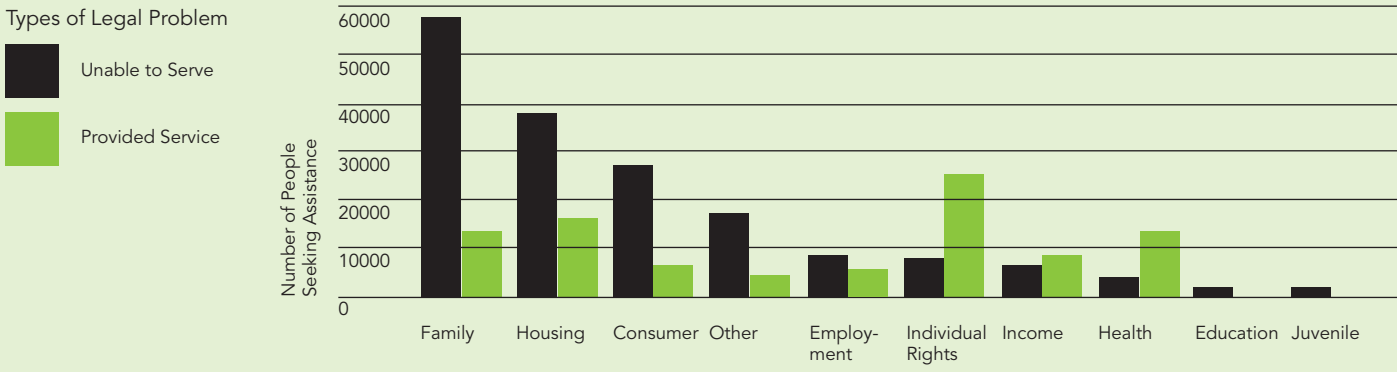
Number of Legal Aid Attorneys Compared with Total Active Attorney Population



Number of Eligible Clients Per Legal Aid Lawyer in 2005

Number of Californians below 125% of Poverty	6,304,000
Number of Legal Aid Lawyers	754
Number of Eligible Clients per Legal Aid Lawyer	**8,361**

2005 California "Unable to Serve" Data For Legal Services Corporation-Funded Programs



Breaking the cycle of violence

Cathy is a mother of two and a domestic violence survivor. When she went to legal aid she had been suffering from three years of beatings by an abusive husband and felt frightened and overwhelmed. The legal aid advocate helped her find safe housing and develop a safety plan, arranged for evaluation for one of the children who showed signs of autism, and got support services for the family. Meanwhile, represented by the legal aid attorney, she won sole custody of her children, secured child and spousal support and obtained $9,000 in housing funds. Cathy and her children have now moved to permanent housing, the children are continuing with their counseling and treatment plans, and Cathy plans to return to school to become a pharmacist.

For more information:
JusticeGapFund@calbar.ca.gov

The State Bar of California | Office of Legal Services, Access & Fairness Programs

WHY IS THE JUSTICE GAP FUND IMPORTANT?

Your contribution to the *Justice Gap Fund* is critical in two ways:

- The *Fund* will support important services that will profoundly impact the lives and stability of thousands of low-income Californians; and
- The *Justice Gap Fund* will clearly indicate the California legal profession's – and YOUR – commitment to justice. In seeking other sources of funding – whether from the legislature, foundations, or corporations – potential funders want to know what the legal profession is doing. This Fund will be one clear answer.

While the responsibility for an accessible justice system is not solely that of the legal profession, it is critical for lawyers to take the lead – to show how important the issue is, through both their pro bono services and their voluntary financial contributions.

Thank you for your contribution.

At root, equal justice is simply the notion that law and the courts should be fair, even if life isn't.

Hon. Earl Johnson, Jr., Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District; Speech at Opening Ceremony, National Equal Justice Library, quoted in 17 Saint Louis University Law Review 265 (1998).