



California Legal Services

Legal Services Corporation Needs Full Funding to Protect California Residents

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is the largest single provider of funding to civil legal assistance programs for low-income Americans. LSC distributes grants to 136 independent local programs, and LSC grantees operate legal aid programs in each of the 50 states.

The local programs supported by LSC funding provide civil legal services to individuals at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. 2.3 million Americans are assisted each year by LSC grantees; nearly 1 million cases are closed each year. LSC grantees assist veterans returning from war, domestic violence victims, individuals undergoing foreclosure or other housing issues, those coping with the after-effects of natural disasters, and families involved in child custody disputes. Nearly 57 million Americans, including almost 20 million children, qualify for civil legal assistance from the LSC grantees.

California has eleven grantees: Bay Area Legal Aid, California Indian Legal Services, California Rural Legal Assistance, Central California Legal Services, Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inland Counties Legal Services, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Legal Aid Society of Orange County, Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Legal Services of Northern California, and Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, bringing in a total of \$51,064,257 funding for low-income citizens. However, current budget proposals are calling for a \$70 million reduction (or possibly an even greater cut) in LSC funding. Should these proposals pass, LSC funding would drop from current levels of \$420 million to \$350 million, resulting in a loss of \$9,191,566 for California.

Congress should not reduce funding to the Legal Services Corporation because:

- **The economic difficulties have already placed a heavy burden on legal services programs at a time when more Americans than ever qualify for, and desperately need, legal assistance.** One in every two eligible clients who seeks assistance from an LSC funded legal aid program is turned away due to lack of resources. Funding is critical to help low-income residents of California with pressing civil legal needs.
- **Other funding sources for legal aid programs have diminished in recent years.** Due to the current economic conditions, funding to legal aid and pro bono programs from state and local sources has declined. State budgets are shrinking, private donations have declined, and revenue from Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) has decreased due to low interest rates.
- **Funding for LSC provides a framework for pro bono attorney programs.** Despite best efforts, pro bono work cannot replace LSC funding for civil legal services. LSC actually provides the infrastructure for pro bono systems, and a reduction in LSC funding would impede attorneys from providing pro bono assistance in civil legal matters.

The Legal Services Corporation needs full funding to provide its grantees with adequate resources to serve the low-income people of California. Any decrease in money to LSC will prevent grantees from the ability to assist residents of California in civil legal matters.