

April 10, 2018

Re: Fully Fund The Legal Services Corporation

To All Members of Congress:

As leaders of more than 180 U.S. law firms with offices in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, we encourage you to maintain the bi-partisan support for fully funding the Legal Services Corporation ("LSC"). Specifically, we respectfully request that you support LSC's requested appropriation of \$564 million for FY 2019.

For more than four decades, Congress has funded LSC to provide grants to local legal aid organizations in all 50 states, covering every county in our nation. Proposals to defund LSC appear to misunderstand the local impact and control of this federal funding. LSC's grants are spent only by community-based organizations, which supplement the funds with local fundraising, to provide critical civil legal services to low-income individuals, like veterans seeking benefits, women fleeing domestic violence, and families struggling to stay in their homes. LSC's local grantees follow the Congressional mandate to focus their resources on these vulnerable individuals in our communities; they are precluded by law from using this money to, among other things, represent prisoners, file class actions, and litigate re-districting actions.

The local legal aid organizations funded by LSC are critical to our firms and our communities. The lawyers at our firms collectively provide millions of hours of free legal services each year to individuals in desperate need of assistance. Our ability to provide these pro bono legal services *is directly dependent on partnership with LSC-funded legal aid organizations*, which screen cases for merit and eligibility, and train and mentor our attorneys. Eliminating the Legal Services Corporation will not only imperil the ability of civil legal aid organizations to serve Americans in need, it will also vastly diminish the private bar's capacity to help these individuals. The pro bono activity facilitated by LSC funding is exactly the kind of public-private partnership the government should encourage, not eliminate.

It is also important to understand that LSC funds local legal aid organizations in rural areas that most law firms have difficulty serving because of their lawyers' geographic location and/or bar memberships. In many rural counties across our nation, the local legal aid organizations funded by LSC are the only available help for low-income Americans.

LSC funding is money well spent in our local communities. State studies have shown that the problems solved by legal aid offer a strong return on investment. For instance, in Florida in 2016, civil legal services saved \$60.4 million, including emergency shelter and foreclosure costs. In Tennessee in 2015, civil legal aid saved \$1.3 million on emergency shelters; \$7.5 million in costs to domestic violence survivors, including medical and mental health expenses; and \$33.8 million in foreclosure costs for residents and local governments. In Virginia in 2015, civil legal aid spending saved \$1.2 million in emergency shelter costs and \$1.9 million in healthcare and other expenses related to domestic violence. Other state surveys, from Pennsylvania and Iowa for instance, have shown that every dollar spent on legal aid has an eleven-fold local economic impact.

Our local communities depend on the legal aid organizations funded by LSC, and our firms, in turn, rely on these legal aid agencies to increase the impact of our volunteer legal services. That is why our firms, as well as our individual lawyers, give generously to LSC grantees. We ask that Congress do its part by fully funding LSC and continuing its bi-partisan support of civil legal aid for our communities.

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