

**Stephen N. Zack**  
President

**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION**

321 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60654-7598  
(312) 988-5109  
Fax: (312) 988-5100  
E-mail: [abapresident@abanet.org](mailto:abapresident@abanet.org)

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The Honorable Vincent Gray  
Chair, City Council of the District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 504  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Gray:

On behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members, I am writing to urge you to support \$3.279 million in funding for the District's Access to Justice program for fiscal year 2012. That amount will maintain the FY 2011 funding level approved by the Council just seven months ago.

Mayor Fenty's proposed budget would reduce funding for this vital program by more than 50% from its FY 2011 level. Given the high rate of unemployment and the number of the District's residents facing critical legal problems such as mortgage foreclosures, evictions, credit defaults, family tensions caused by unemployment, and the loss of public benefits, this is no time to reduce the availability of needed legal services by those who cannot otherwise afford them.

It is my understanding that the legal services network in the District already suffered a 25% loss of funding last year, due to the reduction of other funding sources, and that Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) revenue has declined precipitously this year again, due to low interest rates. Under these circumstances, it is crucial that the City Council maintain its funding level to provide legal services to its most vulnerable residents.

While the District faces severe budget pressures and the Council must make difficult funding choices, I urge you to continue to fully fund the Access to Justice program. Without that funding, many of the District's low-income residents will have no where to turn to receive the legal assistance that they so desperately need.

Sincerely,



Stephen N. Zack

cc: Members of the City Council