RESTORE LSC FUNDING TO $593M FOR FY 2020

BACKGROUND: The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) ensures “Equal Justice under Law” by enabling access to justice:

- Every district in the United States is served by LSC grantees.
- LSC provides the backbone for America’s civil legal aid and pro bono systems.
- LSC grants enable self-help & legal assistance so people can know their rights.

Did You Know?

LSC is efficient with tax dollars. Multiple clean audits show that 94% of LSC’s appropriation goes directly to grantees.

Federal Role in Equal Justice

The federal government is responsible for securing people’s rights under federal law.

- The Declaration of Independence states: “To secure our rights, governments are instituted.”
- Legal aid attorneys routinely assist their clients with problems that arise under federal law, such as the Violence Against Women Act, FEMA disaster relief, bankruptcy, and Social Security disability.
- Without federal funding, equal justice would amount to an unfunded mandate on states and localities.

What is the Cost-Benefit?

Over 40 cost-benefit studies show civil legal aid provides a good return on the taxpayer investment.

- For example, the Mississippi Bar Association 2017 report shows $12 of benefit per $1 spent.
- Preventing domestic violence and foreclosures are measurable public goods.
- Communities’ savings, the economic-multiplier effect, and direct client and family benefits yield a return on investment.

Constituent Support

Legal aid attorneys take difficult cases off the plates of congressional caseworkers.

- Federal legislators don’t leave constituents’ federal casework to the states.
- Legal aid attorneys help constituents secure their federal rights, just like constituent services staff.

Key Populations Served

Despite limited resources, LSC assisted around 1.8 million Americans in 2016. Domestic-violence survivors, veterans, aging Americans, rural residents, women (71.5% of clients), opioid survivors, and natural-disaster victims all benefit.

LSC Funding

Increased Need for LSC Services

- Over the past decade, the number of people qualifying for assistance has increased approximately 25%.
- 28% of Americans—89.3 million people—qualified for LSC-funded services at some point during 2016.
- Only 2%—1.8 million people—received LSC-funded services during 2016.

Effective Leveraging

The federal expenditure for LSC amounts to only about 25% of all legal aid funding in the U.S.

LSC Funding is Down

The FY 2019 LSC appropriation is 18% lower than FY 2010 (inflation adjusted). LSC’s $415 million in FY 2019 is 45% less than LSC’s 1980s average of $728 million (inflation adjusted).

Support for LSC Funding

- 82% of respondents to a 2013 poll believe that it is important for everyone to have access to civil legal help.
- Every state’s Chief Justice, represented by the Conference of Chief Justices, supports more funding for LSC.
- Late Justice Antonin Scalia stated the support of the U.S. Supreme Court for LSC, saying, “Can there be a just society when some do not have justice?”
- President George H.W. Bush and President George W. Bush supported LSC funding.

THE ASK

- Restore LSC funding to $593 million
- Join the Access to Legal Aid Caucus
- Sign the Dear Colleague supporting LSC funding

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