

March 28, 2017

To: All Members of Congress

The undersigned 185 leaders of corporate legal departments across the country write to urge you to support the preservation of the **Legal Services Corporation (LSC)** and provide funding at a level of \$450 million for FY 2018, which would be consistent with the appropriation received in FY2010, adjusted for inflation. As the cornerstone of equal justice in America, LSC creates a level playing field for the many lower and moderate- income families who cannot afford a lawyer. By upholding the fundamental American promise of liberty and justice for all, the minimal investment in LSC generates a significant positive return for business and for the health of individuals and communities across the nation.

As lawyers and business leaders, we understand how LSC's national framework provides the basic structure that supports the provision of civil legal services. It also supports the countless hours of pro bono representation provided by corporate legal departments and in-house attorneys. Without the structure and dedicated resources of LSC, many of these volunteer hours would not be possible. Pro bono assistance is an essential part of the representation that is available to people who would otherwise go unrepresented and is increasingly recognized as good for business.

Civil legal issues can have devastating, life altering consequences for people who are forced to face the justice system alone. Legal aid programs provide access to vital resources that anyone can use to navigate the civil justice system. LSC grantees serve almost two million Americans facing critical legal needs every year. These programs serve, among others:

- active duty military personnel, as well as veterans returning from wars;
- domestic violence victims;
- elderly individuals;
- families who are in danger of losing their homes;
- victims of natural disasters;
- families involved in child custody disputes; and
- small business owners.

Federal support for legal aid forms the foundation of our nation's civil justice infrastructure. LSC funds grantees covering every county in America, and its grantees are often the only legal aid program for many in our country's most rural areas. Without this targeted approach, effective access to our civil justice system would likely be mainly available only in urban and suburban parts of the United States.

While we understand that within this fiscal environment difficult decisions about spending must be made, we believe that access to justice is not an expendable luxury but an indispensable manifestation of our country's most fundamental values. Just as investing in

America's roads and bridges are vital to our transportation infrastructure, LSC is a vital part of the infrastructure that undergirds our justice system, ensuring that fair treatment is not dependent on a person's ability to pay for it.

Sincerely,

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