

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Shaheen:

**We write asking you to include robust funding for the Legal Services Corporation ("LSC") in the Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.**

The FY 2017 and 2016 Continuing Appropriations Resolutions provided LSC with \$385 million. In a difficult budget environment, this was a critical increase of \$10 million over FY 2015. We are grateful for your support for this critical program.

Nevertheless, since 2010, LSC's appropriation has been reduced by 8 percent, at a time when there is a staggering, unmet need for vital legal aid. Additional funding is more important than ever, and your support in this effort is critical.

The need for civil legal aid is greater now than ever. In 2015, the number of Americans eligible for LSC-funded legal assistance was 60.6 million people – that's nearly one in every five Americans. That year, LSC grantees helped nearly 1.9 million people in all households served. Grantees closed 755,774 cases nationwide, including 91,618 with the involvement of pro bono attorneys. Nearly 70% of the people assisted were women and 17% were at least 60 years old.

Despite the critical need for legal services, the President's Budget Blueprint for FY 2018 calls for the elimination of LSC. Leaders in the business and legal community from across the country have written in support of LSC in response to the President's request. Supporters of LSC include State Bar Foundations, 185 Corporate General Counsels, 150 of the nation's largest law firms, law school deans and the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators. LSC funds local programs in every state and every congressional district and its continued funding make a crucial difference to millions of low-income Americans.

The elimination of LSC would mean that hundreds of thousands of veterans, elderly victims of foreclosure, and women and children desperate to escape domestic violence will be denied assistance. Low-income Americans receive aid with consumer, housing, and employment issues from LSC recipients. Funding for legal services provides assistance to low-income Americans on matters involving securing housing for veterans and families, freeing seniors from financial abuse, serving rural areas when others won't, protecting battered women, and helping disaster survivors.

LSC funding is essential to rural communities. Federal funding allows access to the courts and justice to rural populations who in most cases would not have access to a lawyer without federal funding. For many states with large rural areas, funding from LSC represents the majority of their funding. Nearly 80% of LSC's funding is awarded to local programs with a service area that includes a rural population. Without LSC funding, these populations would not receive assistance.

Recent research shows that civil legal aid is a good investment of taxpayer dollars, as it reduces clients' reliance on other types of governmental aid and enhances their ability to participate in the marketplace. Several state studies show that investment in civil legal aid stimulates significant economic benefits for communities, saving millions in emergency shelter costs, health care, foster care and law enforcement.

Further, legal aid programs have been critical in providing legal assistance to low-income residents impacted by deadly tornadoes and floods. LSC programs help disaster victims obtain FEMA and other government disaster-related benefits, assist with life, medical and property insurance claims, replace wills and other important legal documents, and provide counsel on mortgage-foreclosure and other housing matters.

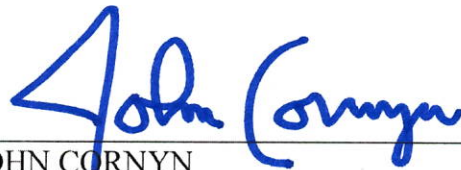
**Increased federal funding to legal services is essential. Therefore, we request that the Subcommittee robustly fund the LSC in Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.**

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Without increases in federal funding, many more of our most vulnerable citizens will be denied critical legal assistance.



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY  
United States Senator

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senator




TAMMY BALDWIN  
United States Senator



DANIEL SULLIVAN  
United States Senator





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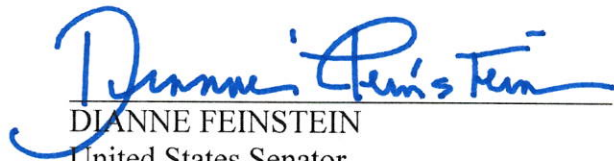
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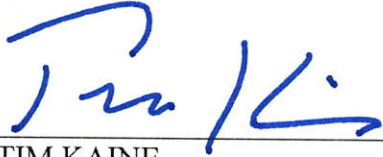
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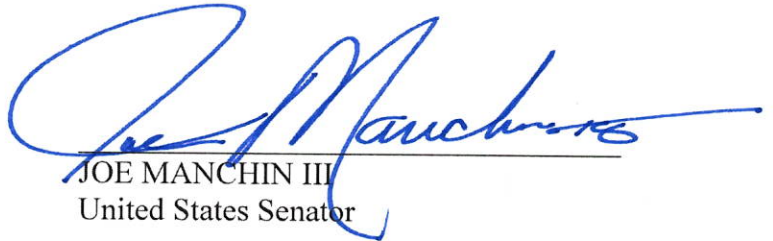
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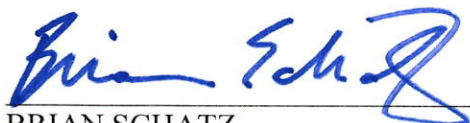
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