

Memorandum in Support

NYSBA Federal Memorandum #3

April 15, 2015

ISSUE: ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC), formed in 1974 with bipartisan Congressional support, was created to ensure that all Americans have access to a lawyer and the justice system for civil legal issues regardless of their ability to pay. The LSC provides funding to independent local legal services programs through a competitive grant process.

LSC clients include the working poor, veterans, family farmers and people with disabilities. Family law matters (including domestic violence and child custody) and housing issues are the largest categories of cases handled by LSC-funded programs.

Many beneficiaries of LSC funding were formerly middle-class, who became poor because of the breakup of their family, unemployment, illness, age, or disaster. A high percentage of legal aid clients have been women, most of them mothers with children. Many victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks have received assistance from LSC-funded programs, including family members of victims in need of help with social security survivor benefits, landlord/tenant issues, child custody and guardianship issues, emergency public assistance and many other matters. Further, significant numbers of low-income families have found themselves in need of legal aid to prevent homelessness resulting from foreclosures on sub-prime mortgages.

New York has seven LSC grantees: Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Legal Assistance of Western New York, Legal Services NYC, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Committee, and Neighborhood Legal Services. The state currently receives \$19,869,031 in federal funding for LSC.

Congress provided a much-needed \$10-million increase for LSC in FY15. However, the need for legal assistance continues to rise, with over 63 million Americans eligible for civil legal aid. Therefore, we request that Congress approve the Administration's requested \$452 million for LSC for FY16.

Funding the program at \$452 million will provide an additional \$4,241,313 in legal aid funds for New York in the next fiscal year, bringing the state's total to \$24,110,344.

Based on the foregoing, the New York State Bar Association strongly **SUPPORTS** providing \$452 million to fund the Legal Services Corporation for Fiscal Year 2016.