

# House Cuts \$70 Million in LSC Funding

Washington, DC 2/19/2011 —The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$70 million cut in Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding from the current level, reducing grants to 136 local legal aid nonprofit programs by an average of 18 percent.

The proposed \$70 million cut is from the Fiscal Year 2010 funding of \$394.4 million provided to LSC programs. An effort to eliminate all funding for LSC programs was defeated on a bipartisan vote, 259 to 171, on February 16.

Under the House proposal, about 160,000 fewer low-income people would receive civil legal assistance and 80,000 fewer cases would be handled by the LSC-funded programs. The proposed funding cut would force layoffs of about 370 staff attorneys and shut down some offices in rural areas.

“The impact of the proposed reduction would be devastating to these LSC programs,” LSC President James J. Sandman said. “These proposed cuts would come at a time when many LSC programs are overwhelmed with requests for civil legal assistance. The Constitution says in its very first line that a primary purpose of government is to ‘establish justice.’ Our country cannot sacrifice equal access to justice to any year’s fiscal pressures.”

The civil legal assistance provided by the 136 nonprofit programs across the nation helps women escape domestic violence, keeps families in their homes by averting unlawful foreclosures and evictions, helps veterans and the disabled obtain benefits, protects the elderly from consumer fraud, and provides help with other civil legal problems. The programs provide legal services to persons at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty guidelines—\$27,938 for a family of four.

The House approved the funding reduction as part of its Continuing Resolution to fund federal agencies and programs through the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011. The proposal would represent an \$85 million reduction from the White House’s Fiscal

Year 2011 budget request of \$435 million. The bill will now go to the Senate for a vote. The government is currently funded at Fiscal Year 2010 levels until March 4.

Established by Congress in 1974, LSC is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that receives an annual appropriation to promote equal access to justice and to provide for high-quality civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and families. About 95 percent of the appropriation is distributed as grants to the 136 legal aid programs, which have more than 900 offices across the nation.

LSC-funded programs touch the lives of about 8 million Americans annually. Programs close cases involving households with about 2.3 million people each year. Another 5 million receive legal information at self-help centers and community presentations that explain legal forms and procedures or were provided a referral for pro bono assistance and other legal services.

Last updated on December 12, 2011.

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