

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2004

The Honorable Judd Gregg  
The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings  
Chair and Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary  
And Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gregg and Senator Hollings:

We are writing in support of the request by the Legal Services Corporation for \$352.4 million in the Fiscal Year 2005 Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. This amount represents a modest increase of \$13.6 million over the FY 2004 appropriation of \$338.8 million.

Additional funds are clearly needed to see that the doors of justice are open to those in our society who are unable to afford access to the legal system. The Corporation's request is for a four percent increase to help provide much-needed relief to struggling local legal aid programs, so that they can address the large and growing unmet need for legal services for low-income persons more effectively.

Legal services are in greater demand than ever, but the Corporation has suffered serious reductions in federal funding in the last decade. In 1996, Congress cut LSC's budget by 30 percent, from \$415 million to \$278 million, which forced the closing of more than 100 legal aid offices across the nation. Yet, from 1990 to 2000, the number of people living in poverty in the United States increased by 5.7%. Today, more than 43 million Americans are eligible for federally funded legal assistance -- an all-time high. Every year, tens of thousands of eligible persons with major legal problems are turned away because of the local programs' lack of resources.

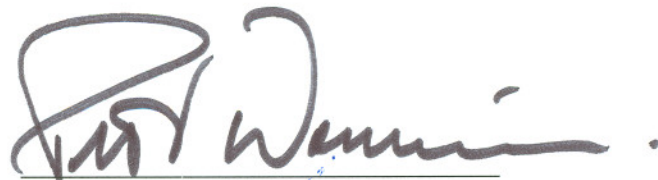
Funds provided by the Corporation are indispensable to the 143 local programs serving every county and Congressional District in the country. Local clients include the working poor, veterans, family farmers, people with disabilities and low-income military families. Their legal problems involve family relationships, domestic violence, health, employment, housing and many other basic issues. The failure to resolve these problems causes even greater hardship for them and often leads to their reliance on other government programs.

Clearly, large numbers of Americans do not have access to the legal representation they need. Without this modest increase in federal funding, many more will be denied fair representation. We urge you to fund the Legal Services Corporation at no less than \$352.4 million to help meet this urgent need.

Sincerely,



Edward M. Kennedy



Pete V. Domenici




Gordon H. Smith



Maria Cantwell



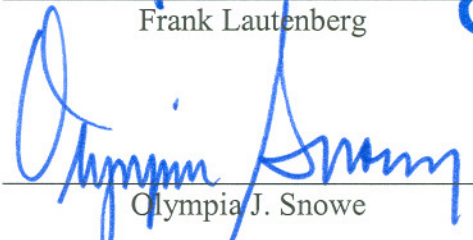
Debbie Stabenow



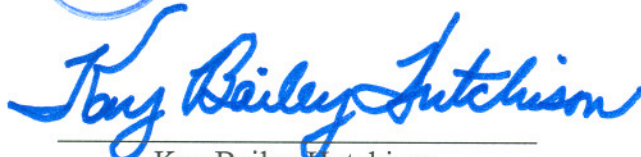
Frank Lautenberg



John B. Breaux



Olympia J. Snowe



Kay Bailey Hutchison



John Cornyn



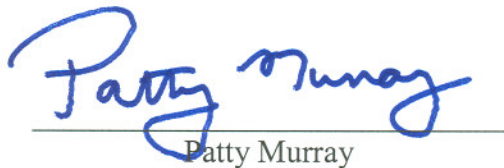
Barbara Boxer



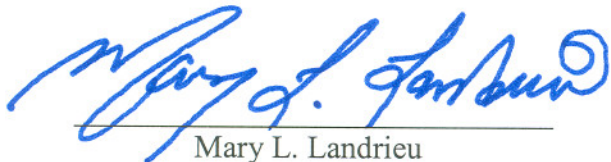
Paul S. Sarbanes



Barbara A. Mikulski



Patty Murray



Mary L. Landrieu



Jeff Bingaman



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*Russell D. Feingold*  
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*Hillary Rodham Clinton*  
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*Susan M. Collins*  
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*Jon S. Corzine*  
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*Charles E. Schumer*  
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*John F. Kerry*  
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*Mark Dayton*  
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*Mark Pryor*  
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*Christopher J. Dodd*  
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*Carl Levin*  
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*Herb Kohl*  
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*Richard J. Durbin*  
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*Jack Reed*  
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*Blanche L. Lincoln*  
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*Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*  
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*John Edwards*  
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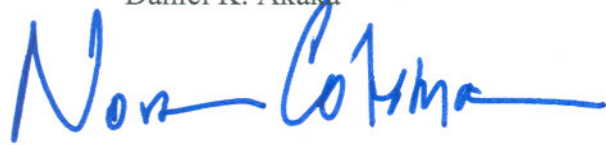
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*James M. Jeffords*  
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*Tom Daschle*  
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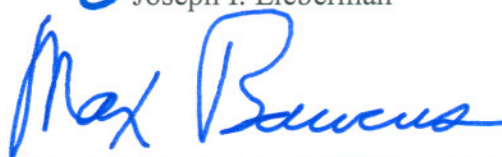
Daniel K. Akaka

  
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Norm Coleman

  
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Joseph I. Lieberman

  
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Max Baucus