

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 15, 2005

The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chair and Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Senator Mikulski:

We are writing in support of the request by the Legal Services Corporation (“LSC” or “Corporation”) Board of Directors for \$363,809,000 in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. This amount represents a necessary increase of \$11,009,000 over the Board’s FY 2005 request and a \$33,005,295 increase over the final FY 2005 appropriation of \$330,804,000.

The LSC’s bipartisan board of directors unanimously approved this request for a funding increase at the same time the Administration asked for a 5 percent funding cut to \$318,250,000. In its budget submission to Congress, the Board stated that the request “takes into account the budgetary pressures facing the federal government,” [but] represents the minimum amount necessary for LSC to effectively undertake its mission of delivering quality civil legal assistance to eligible low-income Americans.”

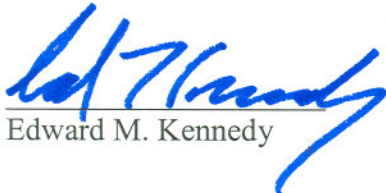
Legal services are in greater demand than ever, but the Corporation has suffered serious reductions in federal funding in the last decade. In 1996, Congress cut LSC’s budget by 30 percent, from \$415 million to \$278 million, which forced the closing of more than 100 legal aid offices across the nation. Yet, from 1990 to 2000, the number of people living in poverty in the United States increased by 5.7%, and today more than 43 million Americans are eligible for federally funded legal assistance. While LSC’s appropriation was essentially the same between 2002 and 2005, total inflation increased by 7.4 percent. As a result, tens of thousands of eligible persons with significant legal problems are turned away because of the local programs’ lack of resources. Now, newly available Case Service Reporting (CSR) statistics show that as funding has declined over the past 3 years, the number of cases closed by LSC-funded programs has also declined from 978,000 in 2002 to 901,000 in 2004.

Funds provided by the Corporation are indispensable to the 140 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 necessary increase in federal funding, many more will be denied fair representation. We urge you to fund the LSC at no less than \$363,809,000 to help meet this urgent need.

Sincerely,



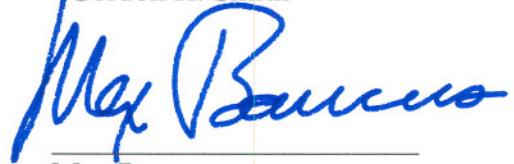
Edward M. Kennedy



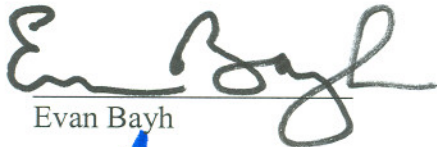
Gordon H. Smith



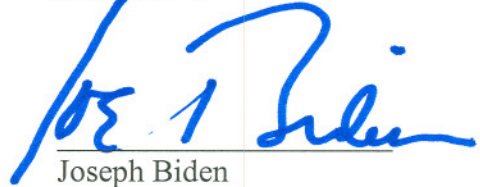
Daniel Akaka



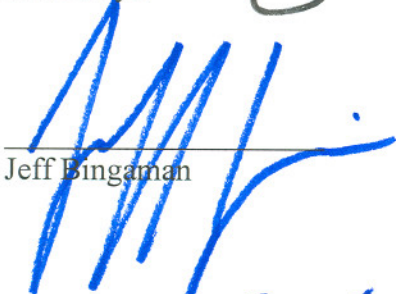
Max Baucus



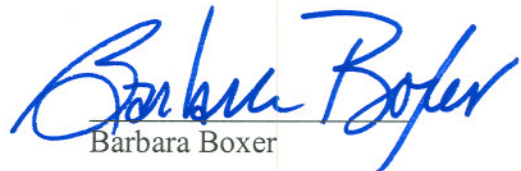
Evan Bayh



Joseph Biden



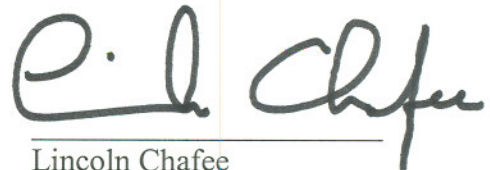
Jeff Bingaman



Barbara Boxer



Maria Cantwell



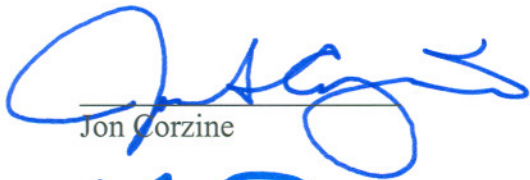
Lincoln Chafee



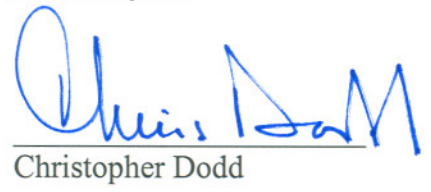
Hillary Rodham Clinton



Susan Collins

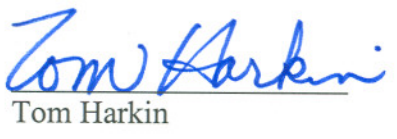

Jon Corzine


Mark Dayton

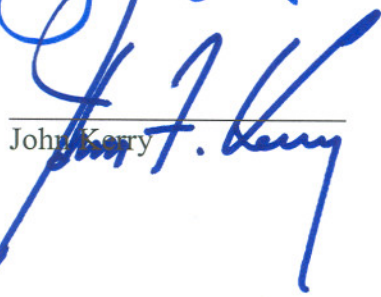

Christopher Dodd


Byron Dorgan

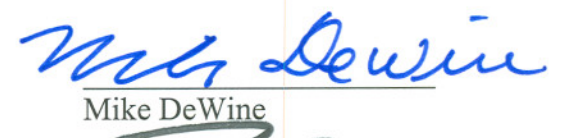

Russell Feingold


Tom Harkin


James Jeffords


John F. Kerry


Norm Coleman

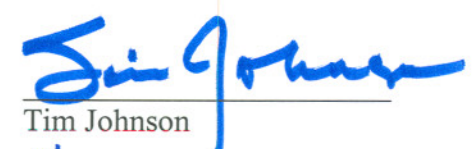

Mike DeWine

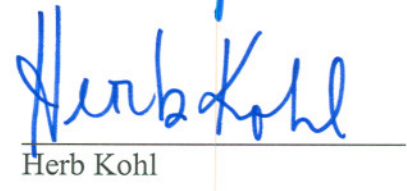

Pete Domenici

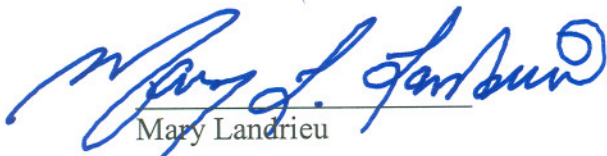

Richard Durbin

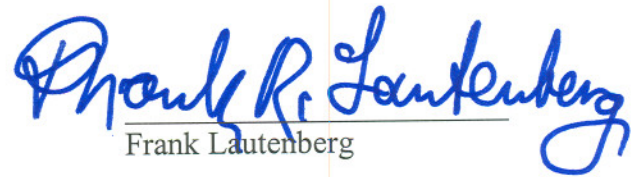

Bill Nelson

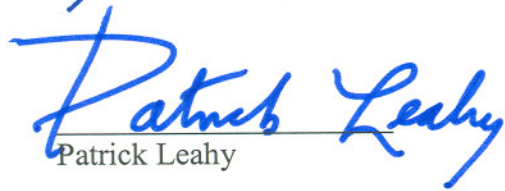

Kay Bailey Hutchison

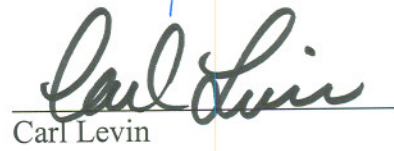

Tim Johnson


Herb Kohl

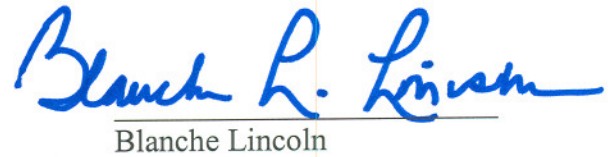

Mary Landrieu

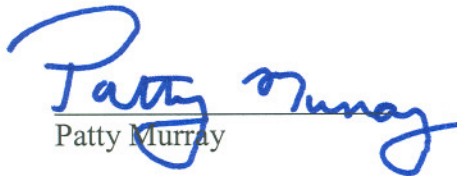

Frank Lautenberg

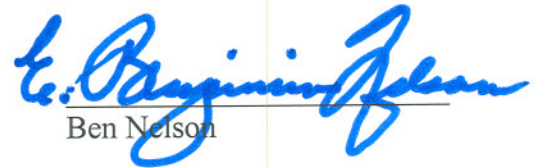

Patrick Leahy


Carl Levin

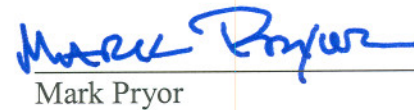

Joseph Lieberman


Blanche Lincoln

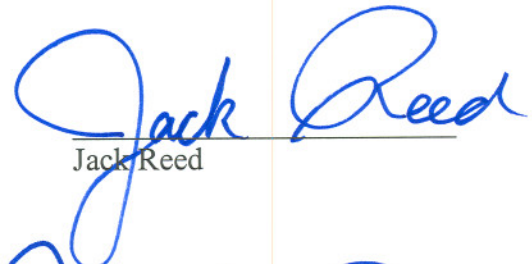

Patty Murray


Ben Nelson

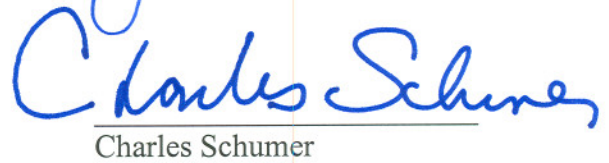

Barack Obama


Mark Pryor

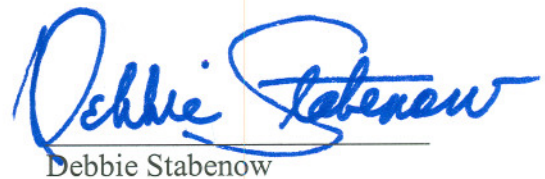

John Rockefeller


Jack Reed


Ken Salazar


Charles Schumer


Olympia Snowe


Debbie Stabenow


Ron Wyden



Paul S. Sarbanes



John Cornyn