

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2007

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Mollohan and Frelinghuysen:

We are writing to support an appropriation of at least \$380 million for the Legal Services Corporation in the Fiscal Year 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

Fifty million Americans qualify for federally funded legal assistance. Many of these individuals have significant legal needs and may suddenly be poor because of natural disaster, loss of a job, the break-up of their family, housing loss or uninsured medical care. While the need for civil legal services has increased, LSC funding and our ability to ensure access to the justice system falls far short. For FY 2007, LSC was funded at \$348 million, the highest level since LSC's funding was severely slashed in 1996 from \$415 million to \$278 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 Legal Services Corporation, in October 2005, released the results of a year-long study "Documenting the Justice Gap in America," showing that one of every two individuals who qualify for and actually seek assistance from LSC-funded programs are turned away because of lack of resources. At least eighty percent of the legal needs of the poor are not being addressed. This money will 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. In Oregon, the statewide legal services program is using grant money to reopen an office in Klamath Falls, which was closed due to cuts in federal funding. Increased federal funding would help stabilize that office and could eventually lead to reopening additional offices that were closed due to cuts in federal funding.

Funds provided by the Corporation are indispensable to the 138 local programs serving every county and Congressional District in the United States. 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. A 2005 study showed that 73 percent of legal aid clients have been women, most of them mothers with children.


For FY 2008, the Administration proposed a \$370,000 cut, reducing LSC's funding to \$310.2 million, an amount less than LSC received in 1981. This would require closing at least one additional office in Oregon. The Oregon State Bar Association supports our request for increased Legal Services Corporation funding to enable increased access to legal services.

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 respectfully request funding of at least \$380 million for the Legal Services Corporation to help meet this urgent need.

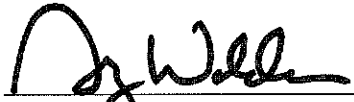
Sincerely,



DARLENE HOOLEY
Member of Congress



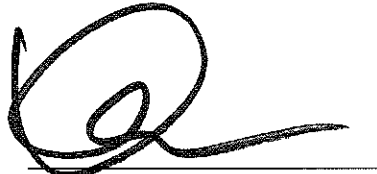
PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress



GREG WALDEN
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



DAVID WU
Member of Congress