

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

June 12, 2006

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice and Science  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
S-146A The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce  
Justice and Science  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
SD-144 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Senator Mikulski:

We write in support of an increase in Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funding to \$358,527,000 in the Fiscal Year 2007 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Bill. This amount is identical to the amount appropriated by the Senate in the FY 2006 bill, and represents a much-needed \$31.9 million increase over the final, post-rescission FY 2006 funding level of \$326,578,000.

A crisis exists in our ability to ensure access to the legal system for millions of low-income individuals and families, many whom are facing new challenges and need assistance after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. A study commissioned by the LSC Board of Directors, "*Documenting the Justice Gap in America*," before the 2005 hurricane season, reported that one in every two individuals who qualify for and actually seek assistance from LSC-funded programs is denied help because of lack of resources. If the *Justice Gap* study were performed today, the number turned away would likely be even greater, since tens of thousands of new clients are seeking help with a variety of core legal issues arising from the hurricanes. This additional burden is being felt along the Gulf Coast, and across the country as well, since so many hurricane victims have relocated to new communities. These disaster-related legal needs are only expected to increase and become even more complicated as longer-term legal issues are identified. As an indication of the problem, approximately 900 cases are still pending under LSC-funded programs four and a half years after the September 11th tragedy.

Since 1996, grantees have focused completely on core legal services, in response to the clear intent of Congress that federal legal services funds should be spent on basic, day-to-day legal problems of individual eligible poor clients. The Corporation currently funds 138 local programs serving every county, state and Congressional District in the United States and its territories. These local programs provide direct services to approximately one million constituents who struggle to get by on incomes below or near the poverty line. Clients include women, victims of domestic violence, survivors of natural and national disasters, the working poor, veterans, family farmers and people with disabilities. Their legal problems involve family relationships, domestic violence, health, employment, housing and many other basic needs. The failure to resolve these issues causes even greater hardship for them, and often leads to their reliance on other government programs.

Clearly, large numbers of low-income individuals and families do not have access to the justice system to resolve their basic legal problems. Without this necessary increase in federal funding, many more will be denied assistance in the months ahead. We urge you to fund the LSC at no less than \$358,527,000 to help meet this urgent need.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

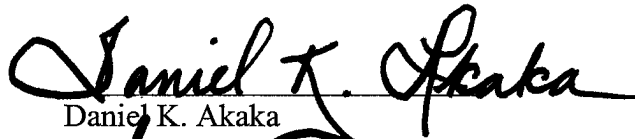
Sincerely,



GORDON H. SMITH



EDWARD M. KENNEDY



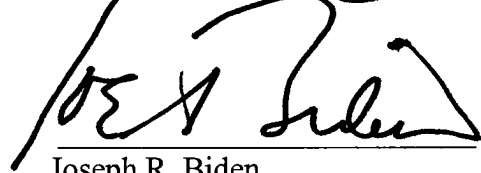
Daniel K. Akaka



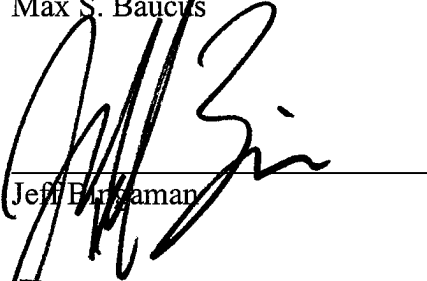
Evan Bayh



Max S. Baucus



Joseph R. Biden



Jeff Blumenthal



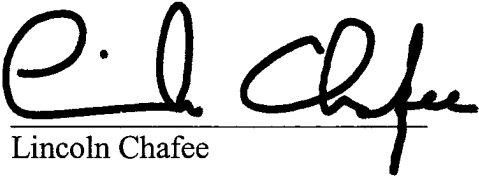
Kit Bond



Barbara Boxer



Maria Cantwell



Lincoln Chafee



Hillary Rodham Clinton




Norm Coleman



Susan Collins



John Cornyn



Mark Dayton



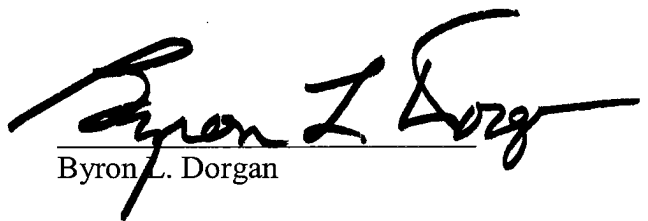
Mike DeWine



Christopher J. Dodd



Pete V. Domenici



Byron L. Dorgan

*Dick Durbin*

Richard J. Durbin

*Russ Feingold*

Russ Feingold

*Tom Harkin*

Tom Harkin

*Kay Bailey Hutchison*

Kay B. Hutchinson

*Jin Jeffords*

Jin Jeffords

*Tim Johnson*

Tim Johnson

*John F. Kerry*

John F. Kerry

*Herb Kohl*

Herb Kohl

*Mary L. Landrieu*

Mary L. Landrieu

*Frank R. Lautenberg*

Frank R. Lautenberg

*Patrick Leahy*

Patrick Leahy

*Carl Levin*

Carl Levin

*Joseph I. Lieberman*

Joseph I. Lieberman

*Blanche L. Lincoln*

Blanche L. Lincoln

*Robert Menendez*

Robert Menendez

*Ben Nelson*

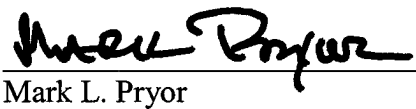
Ben Nelson

*Bill Nelson*

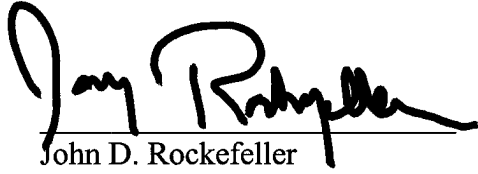
Bill Nelson

*Barack Obama*

Barack Obama



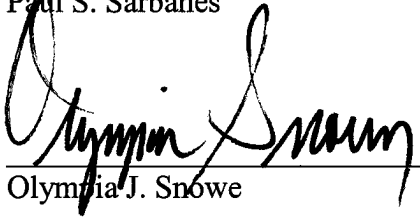
Mark L. Pryor



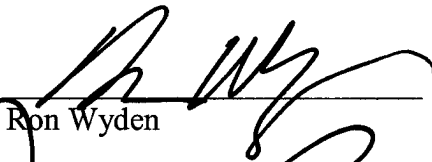
John D. Rockefeller



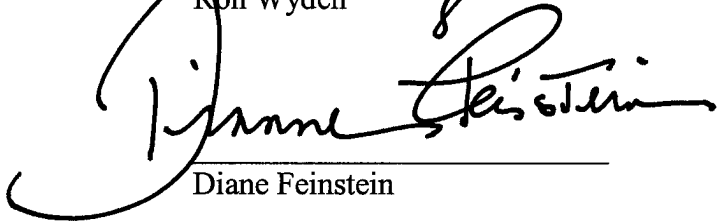
Paul S. Sarbanes



Olympia J. Snowe



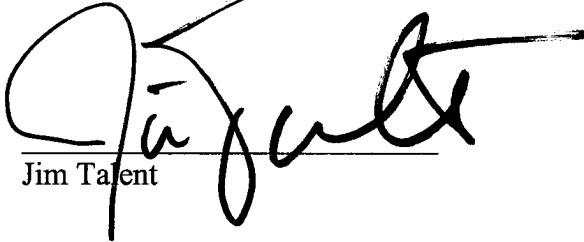
Ron Wyden



Diane Feinstein



Lisa Murkowski



Jim Talent



Jack Reed



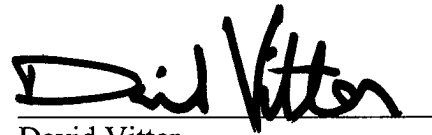
Ken Salazar



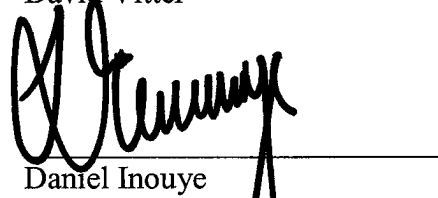
Charles E. Schumer



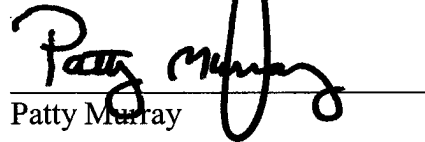
Debbie Stabenow



David Vitter



Daniel Inouye



Patty Murray



Mel Martinez