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LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

2015 Pro Bono Innovation Grant Recipients

September 18, 2015

The Legal Services Corporation announced today that 15 legal aid organizations will receive grants to support innovations in pro bono legal services for low-income clients.

Many of the projects will use technology to connect low-income populations to resources and services, while others aim to increase efficiency and effectiveness through partnerships with law schools, community organizations, and in-house corporate attorneys. Some projects will address issues affecting specific populations such as seniors, veterans, and low-income students.

All the projects seek to engage and recruit pro bono lawyers and other volunteers to leverage LSC's federal funding and increase the resources available to low-income clients.

“We are grateful to Congress for establishing our Pro Bono Innovation Fund to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people and engage more private lawyers and law students in rewarding pro bono work.”

The creation of the fund was recommended by LSC's Pro Bono Task Force in

2012. Congress allocated \$2.5 million for it in its FY 2014 budget and increased that allocation to \$4 million in its FY 2015 budget.

The recipients of the 2015 Pro Bono Innovation Fund are:

Alaska Legal Services Corporation Receives \$187,566 LSC Grant for Pro Bono Academy

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that Alaska Legal Services Corporation will receive a 24-month \$187,566 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to build a Pro Bono Training Academy for volunteer lawyers who lack the relevant expertise to represent low-income Alaskans.

Rural Alaskan Natives have unique and complex legal issues and live in remote locations throughout the state. The academy will help connect lawyers with experts on key practice areas for these clients and create online resources for volunteers to use, including forms, manuals, pleadings, and brief banks.

“I have had the privilege of working with Executive Director Nikole Nelson and the staff at Alaska Legal Services since serving as Alaska’s Attorney General,” said U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan. “The team at ALS are strong advocates for Alaskans in need of legal assistance. It’s great to see that ALS will receive these grants to continue their tireless service to Alaskans.”

With no law school in state, Alaska Legal Services will partner with the University of Washington School of Law, which recently opened an extension office in Anchorage. The law school has expertise in distance learning and will consult in the development of a free online training curriculum for pro bono attorneys.

Law professors and project staff will develop the distance learning curricula and engage law students in summer externships in Alaska and school-year clinics to help with development of pro se materials for clients.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants

we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Alaska Legal Services is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Bay Area Legal Aid Receives \$280,111 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Bay Area Legal Aid** will receive a 24-month \$280,111 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to restructure its pro bono case placement process to require less staff intervention.

Using technology that streamlines and automates case placement and processing, the project will also help place specialized pro bono opportunities with law firms that will help benefit a larger number of low-income people.

The goal is to use business process analysis to increase impact and build broader and deeper relationships with law firms to meet their desire to work on more complex and far-reaching issues for low-income communities.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Members of the California congressional delegation applauded the grant:

Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (CA-11): “As the only organization in California to receive these federal grant funds, I am pleased Bay Area Legal Aid was successful in this

competitive process. The funds will go towards better serving low-income residents who are often most in need of legal assistance in their communities.”

Rep. Anna Eshoo (CA-18): “Bay Area Legal Aid formed in 2000 when three area legal services teams came together with a shared mission—provide quality legal services to our most vulnerable community members. Since then, Bay Legal has helped countless people seek justice, including many of my constituents. With this federal grant, Bay Legal will be able to expand its legal services by implementing new technology that keeps clients better informed of their casework and optimizes the efforts of Bay Legal’s attorneys to assist their clients.”

Rep. Mike Honda (CA-17): “This grant will greatly advance the Bay Area Legal Aid’s mission: to protect their livelihoods, health, and their families. By streamlining the process, assistance will reach those most in need more quickly and efficiently. I congratulate Bay Legal on being awarded this grant and wish them continued success in making a difference in Silicon Valley and the entire Bay Area.”

Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-13): “I am pleased that Bay Area Legal Aid was selected to receive this critical funding. All Americans, regardless of their socio-economic status, should have access to justice. This funding will develop more opportunities for Bay Area Legal Aid and its partners to provide quality legal assistance to the underserved, primarily low-income communities and communities of color, and help them resolve their civil legal problems.”

Rep. Jerry McNerney (CA-09): "This grant is great news for the communities in California's 9th District that depend on Bay Area Legal Aid's services through its advocacy site in Antioch. Economic status should not prevent people from accessing quality legal aid when they need it most. This grant will allow Bay Area Legal Aid to employ new technology to update their service model to enable them to expand pro bono opportunities and ensure that more low-income individuals and families are able to get assistance with complex litigation and legal issues."

Bay Area Legal Aid is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify

and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Georgia Legal Services Program Receives \$197,813 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Georgia Legal Services Program** will receive a 24-month \$197,813 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to create a learning lab within a nonprofit legal incubator. Legal incubators are post-graduate training and support programs for recent law school graduates interested in solo or small firm practice and committed to serving communities in need, both pro bono and for an affordable fee.

The learning lab will coordinate pro bono opportunities for participants in the incubator program, oversee and track pro bono cases and outcomes, and coordinate training and mentoring of incubator attorneys with legal aid advocates. The project will also develop two toolkits on incubator pro bono best practices for law schools and legal aid programs.

Lawyers for Equal Justice is a new, freestanding incubator program that was established by the State Bar of Georgia, the Georgia Access to Justice Commission, and the five Georgia law schools. The incubator is designed to help recent graduates establish practices that use technology, alternative fee arrangements, new models of practice and enhanced pro bono. The incubator attorneys will handle basic poverty law cases including family, consumer, administrative law, simple wills and advance directives, and housing, all with an emphasis on cases in rural areas.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Georgia Legal Services is one of 15 recipients of LSC's \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Idaho Legal Aid Services, Inc. Receives \$276,000 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Idaho Legal Aid Services** will receive a 24-month \$276,000 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to create a Pro Bono Opportunities website that will make pro bono services a more robust part of Idaho's low-income legal service-delivery system.

This portal will create a searchable online space where Idaho attorneys can find statewide pro bono opportunities. The goal is to help improve services to low-income clients by increasing pro bono representation and expanding the cases and services for which attorneys can volunteer.

“Competent legal representation is a foundation of our legal system and necessary to protect the constitutional rights of the people,” said Rep. Raul Labrador (ID-01). “Thousands of low-income Idahoans rely on volunteer lawyers, particularly in civil matters. Providing attorneys an online portal to search for cases of interest promises to improve the quality of justice in our great state.”

Idaho Legal Aid Services will be partnering on this project with the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, which currently relies on a telephone-based system for placing clients with attorneys. The web portal will allow attorneys to search case opportunities by criteria such as legal issue, geographic area, veteran's status, and other factors. If no case opportunity meets their search criteria, the system will be able to automatically notify them when cases that do meet their criteria are posted.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants

we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Idaho Legal Aid Services is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

LAF Receives LSC Pro Bono, Technology Grants to Help Seniors and Enhance Text Message Access to Legal Services

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **LAF** (formerly Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago) will receive a 24-month \$239,207 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to help improve services for low-income seniors.

LAF will partner with the Center for Disability and Elder Law to adapt their pro bono workshop to help low-income seniors access important services, including powers of attorney for health care and property, living wills, and transfer on death instruments.

Planning for incapacity is an important legal service for Chicago’s seniors. Current local resources are inadequate to help this growing population.

In collaboration with Illinois Legal Aid Online, the new project will create an eLearning curriculum that will be available to any volunteer attorney in Illinois.

LAF will also receive a Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) of \$70,750 from the Legal Services Corporation to integrate SMS texting into the statewide legal services website. The project will expand access to legal information through the use of text messaging.

Funds for the TIG program are appropriated by Congress annually to LSC to support innovations in technology to expand access to justice.

Members of the Illinois congressional delegation applauded the grants:

Rep. Danny Davis (IL-07): "I am excited and pleased to learn the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago has been awarded a FY 2015 Pro Bono Grant to offer a 'legal checkup' for advance directives for every low-income senior who contacts LAF for assistance on a legal matter. Many seniors in this community do not have access to counseling about advance directives and, in fact, may not even know their basic rights in this area. I salute LAF for undertaking this initiative. It is consistent with the kind of vision and commitment we have come to expect from the hard working folks at LAF."

Rep. Tammy Duckworth (IL-08): "I am greatly appreciative of the Legal Services Corporation for granting a generous award to the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago. The funds will be critical for expanding legal services to senior citizens and increasing access to information through text messaging for low-income people in the Chicagoland-area. The Legal Assistance Foundation has been a needed provider of legal support for residents of my district for many years, and they are very deserving of this award."

Rep. Bill Foster (IL-11): "I'm pleased to see that the Legal Services Corporation has awarded these two grants to the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago. These resources will help LAF continue efforts to provide access to legal services for low-income seniors and develop new technology for people in need of assistance. The Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago's leadership will help many people in Illinois' Eleventh Congressional District and throughout Chicagoland."

Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05): "Legal Assistance Foundation in Chicago does amazing work, helping people living in poverty with free professional legal services. The grants that LAF is receiving will help seniors obtain legal services in their time of need, and will expand access to legal information through the use of text messaging."

The promise of justice for all is an empty one without access to legal assistance, and I will continue to advocate for grants such as these through my role on the House Appropriations Committee.”

LAF is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

LSC’s \$4 million TIG program, which is in its 16th year, awarded 36 grants this year.

Legal Aid Society, Inc. in Louisville Receives \$333,982 LSC Grant to Help Veterans Access Legal Services

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that Legal Aid Society of Louisville, Kentucky, will receive an 18-month \$333,982 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to create a statewide program for eligible military veterans to receive the legal assistance they need.

Legal Aid Society, in partnership with Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, Kentucky Legal Aid, and Appalachian Research and Defense Fund, will coordinate recruitment and training of volunteer lawyers among the four legal aid organizations and create uniform intake protocols and case-acceptance policies for eligible veterans.

"This important federal investment will help provide Kentucky veterans with access to legal assistance that they might otherwise not be able to afford," said Rep. John Yarmuth (KY-03). "Considering all that the men and women of our military sacrifice to serve, I am proud that this project is sending a clear message that we support our veterans not just when we need them, but when they need us."

The project will also use existing technology to create a statewide hotline to connect any veteran to trained legal aid staff who will conduct an immediate evaluation of

the veteran's legal issue before referring the client to a pro bono volunteer. To help provide ongoing assistance to clients with legal questions, the project will also build on the KY Justice Online system and allow lawyers to provide remote assistance through a pro bono portal on the site.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Legal Aid Society is one of 15 recipients of LSC's \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation Receives \$290,520 LSC Grant for Medical-Legal Partnership

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation** will receive a 24-month \$290,520 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to launch a medical-legal partnership to integrate legal aid into eight community-based health clinics

Ten years after Hurricane Katrina decimated New Orleans' health care delivery system, a new model of community health clinics has emerged to serve the city's most vulnerable populations. Through a partnership with the Pro Bono Project based in New Orleans and the Daughters of Charity Services of New Orleans, this project will allow legal volunteers to provide services on critical disability, Medicaid, and housing issues to patients using those clinics.

This new project will help remove access barriers for low-income clients through new and expanded pro bono services delivered by volunteer lawyers, paralegals, and

law students. The project will also seek to measure improved health and legal outcomes of clients served through the project.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Southeast Louisiana Legal Services Corporation is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Community Legal Aid, Inc. in Worcester Receives \$209,524 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Community Legal Aid** in Worcester, Massachusetts will receive a 24-month \$209,524 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to develop a partnership with UMass Memorial Medical Center. The model will address legal needs that can negatively impact the health of low-income and minority communities and interfere with healthcare providers’ ability to improve the health of these patients.

This project will recruit private attorneys in Central Massachusetts to conduct full assessments of patients’ legal needs and then connect them with a legal aid attorney.

The medical center’s primary care model seeks better health outcomes for some of the most vulnerable families in Central Massachusetts using a community health framework that integrates care coordination and behavioral health into the primary care setting. In partnership with the hospital’s General Counsel’s Office and Office of Community Benefits, the project will also include a rigorous evaluation to measure the impact of the medical-legal partnership intervention.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Community Legal Aid is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri Receives \$160,000 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Legal Services of Eastern Missouri** will receive a 24-month \$160,000 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to provide free business legal assistance and education to low-income entrepreneurs starting or expanding community businesses.

The focus will be on minority and women entrepreneurs who cannot afford legal services. The goals of the project are to increase pro bono opportunities for transactional attorneys, recruit new volunteers, meet the legal needs of a larger number of disadvantaged entrepreneurs, and produce online pro bono training materials.

The project seeks to spur community economic development activities, including small business development, which are critical to revitalizing low-income areas. Legal Services of Eastern Missouri will also conduct a national survey of existing transactional pro bono projects for micro-entrepreneurs and will develop a manual of best practices that can be shared with other legal aid programs interested in launching similar efforts.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase

pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Legal Aid of Western Missouri Receives \$257,441 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Legal Aid of Western Missouri** will receive a 24-month \$257,441 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to bring large law firm resources to the urban core of Kansas City to improve neighborhood conditions.

The Adopt-a-Neighborhood project will work with community partners to conduct need and asset assessments in five core neighborhoods to determine the best role for law firm and pro bono volunteers.

“I am thrilled that the Legal Services Corporation has chosen Legal Aid of Western Missouri as a recipient of a FY 2015 Pro Bono Grant,” said Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (MO-05). “This money will be vital in ensuring much needed resources, including legal assistance and community development are available to those in the urban core. Legal Aid’s Adopt-A-Neighborhood project is doing incredible work already in revitalizing the community, but this grant is of principal importance in continuing their assistance to numerous individuals.”

In the urban core of Kansas City, the lack of access to legal assistance often means that issues ranging from lack of access to healthy food to the causes of blighted property never get addressed. Legal Aid hopes to change that with this new project,

based on a successful six-year partnership between a major law firm and the Marlborough neighborhood in Kansas City.

Pro bono opportunities may include the simple negotiation of documents and contracts for small community nonprofits, litigating clear title and abandoned property issues, assisting with negotiations to bring a grocery store to a neighborhood, or converting an abandoned warehouse into a community center.

The project will also expand opportunities for large- and mid-sized firms to form long-term pro bono partnerships in low-income communities and to provide training for new attorneys.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Legal Aid of Western Missouri is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

New Mexico Legal Aid Receives \$272,718 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **New Mexico Legal Aid** will receive a 24-month \$272,718 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to create a statewide coalition of pro bono attorneys, law students, and paralegals to assist low-income families in some of the country’s highest poverty rate communities.

Through the organization’s DirectLaw pro bono portal, attorneys in urban areas will be able to access web-based resources and communicate securely online and via

videoconferencing with clients, giving priority to underserved rural families and single-parent households.

New Mexico's U.S. senators applauded the grant:

Senator Martin Heinrich: "New Mexico Legal Aid provides critical legal services across the state that protect New Mexicans' livelihoods, health, housing and families. This grant will help build online support for pro bono attorneys to provide quality free legal assistance, especially to those in our rural and underserved communities. I am pleased Legal Services Corporation is working collaboratively with the state to improve delivery of legal services, and I will continue to support programs that give all New Mexicans equal access to legal representation."

Senator Tom Udall: "In our legal system, everyone is equal in the eyes of the law, but in a big, rural state, it's often difficult for low-income families and individuals to access even basic legal services they need to ensure they're fairly represented. New Mexico Legal Aid provides a critically needed service, and it deserves praise for finding innovative ways to ensure more low-income New Mexicans can get legal assistance when they need it. This grant will help New Mexico Legal Aid expand its reach and improve its services, and I was proud to support it in the U.S. Senate."

The project will train law students and paralegals to use the DirectLaw system to provide remote research and other support for pro bono attorneys. New Mexico Legal Aid will also partner with the Southwest Women's Law Center and the New Mexico Women's Bar Association to build the statewide coalition by conducting a "One Woman, One Case" campaign to expand the number of attorneys who can handle family law matters and other legal issues that address persistent poverty.

"We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid," said LSC President Jim Sandman. "The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation."

New Mexico Legal Aid is one of 15 recipients of LSC's \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York Receives \$362,559 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York** will receive an 18-month \$362,559 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to expand service to low-income people in rural areas by creating a virtual platform that connects rural clients to urban volunteer attorneys.

The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York will partner with Legal Assistance of Western New York and the Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County on the platform, which will allow for online interviews and shared documents so attorneys can help review and prepare pro se pleadings for housing and consumer law matters.

“Access to affordable, quality legal services is a critical need in largely rural areas like ours,” said Congressman Chris Gibson (NY-19). “I am delighted the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York will launch this exciting new program with the support of the Legal Services Corporation, connecting greater numbers of Upstate New Yorkers to qualified volunteer attorneys. My staff and I will continue to advocate for this vital programming on Capitol Hill.”

Rep. Paul Tonko (NY-20) also applauded the grant: “I thank LSC for the important legal support they provide our friends and neighbors most in need. The funds allocated to LAS will assist communities throughout the Capital Region, creating essential infrastructure to connect urban volunteers with the rural clients they represent. This will go a long way in expanding these services by enlisting new

volunteers and ensuring there is enough support for them to effectively represent their clients.”

The project will help address the need of low-income tenants or debtors who face significant challenges when appearing in court without an attorney. It will include a campaign to recruit, support, and sustain volunteers and clients in using the new system. The project will create a scalable technology infrastructure that expands services and lowers the cost of serving rural areas.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Rangel, Nadler Join Legal Services NYC as It Announces \$346,738 LSC Grant to Address Student Loan Crisis

WASHINGTON –New York Congressmen Charles Rangel and Jerry Nadler and Legal Services Corporation President Jim Sandman will join leaders of **Legal Services NYC** on Sept. 22 to announce that the legal aid provider has received a 24-month \$346,738 LSC Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to address student debt issues for low-income individuals.

The project will enlist volunteers who are transactional lawyers at large firms and corporations, as well as law students and others, to help secure appropriate debt discharges, consolidation, and income-related relief.

“I applaud the Legal Services Corporation for their tireless efforts to empower communities in the fight for justice,” said Rangel. “Obtaining higher education is crucial for students to gain better job opportunities, and we must do everything to protect them from enrolling in schools where they are forced to take out huge loans with little in return. The LSC's support for Legal Services NYC will go a long way in providing critical legal assistance to those who are most vulnerable and will help protect our students from misleading job training programs.”

Congressman Nadler agreed: “For more than 40 years, Legal Services Corporation has fought against poverty and sought justice for low-income residents by providing them with high quality free legal help on various civil legal cases ranging from housing, domestic violence to public benefits issues,” said Nadler. “Today I’m proud to join LSC and announce these grants from the Pro Bono Innovation Fund. Grants such as the \$346,738 to Legal Services NYC, will address student debt issues, which has reached crisis level in our country today.”

Low-income people are often targeted by predatory, for-profit trade schools that make misleading promises about the training offered and job prospects post-graduation. Students can take on tens of thousands of dollars in debt to attend, but are left without much to show for it, and without the means to repay their loans. Other low-income people attend legitimate schools, but fall on hard times because of disability or unemployment. This project seeks to assist all these individuals with their debts.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Other members of New York’s congressional delegation applauded the grant:

Rep. Yvette Clarke (NY-09): “Legal Services NYC has a record of distinguished service to the people of the Ninth Congressional District of New York, which I am

honored to represent. I and members of my staff have often worked with Legal Services NYC to coordinate assistance to the families of Brooklyn. This grant will allow Legal Services NYC to represent individuals who have been victimized by for-profit trade schools that have used misleading information about the training available and the ability of graduates to find a job. I am certain that their efforts to secure debt discharges, consolidation, and income-related relief will provide these individuals with an opportunity to restore their finances that would not have otherwise been available.”

Rep. Joe Crowley (NY-14): “Unfortunately, there are too many low-income students being taken advantage of by unscrupulous trade schools that leave them in debt and ill-prepared to seize new job opportunities. That’s why organizations like Legal Services NYC are critical – to provide relief and protect vulnerable New Yorkers who are simply seeking a quality education to get ahead. I’m thrilled that they’ve been awarded this much-needed grant to help them do just that and I thank Legal Services Corporation for ensuring the resources are there for programs like these to help some of the people that need it most.”

Rep. Daniel Donovan (NY-11): “Thank you to Legal Services Corporation (LSC) for allocating funds to protect the vulnerable from predatory practices. As the former District Attorney, I know the legal aid services in New York City are second to none, and I’m confident Legal Services NYC will put this grant to good use. In Congress, I’m proud to have voted to protect LSC’s funding, and will continue to do all I can to support their critical mission.”

Rep. Eliot Engel (NY-16): “Legal Services NYC does remarkable work providing pro bono legal representation to people from low-income communities. With their help, New Yorkers who have been the victims of fraud will finally be able to get relief. I am pleased Legal Services Corporation has awarded this grant to Legal Services NYC. Their support will help make sure my constituents get their day in court.”

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (NY-12): “I am thrilled to congratulate Legal Services NYC

for receiving a Legal Services Corporation 2015 Pro Bono Grant for \$346,738. Legal Services NYC has been there to help people who have been persuaded by unscrupulous predatory, for-profit trade schools to take on student loan debt they will never be able to afford. All too often students are left with thousands of dollars in federal debt instead of a degree that will open the door to a bright future. Additionally, sometimes disability or unemployment causes people to fall behind and they need legal help. This grant will go a long way in helping Legal Services NYC continue their great work assisting low-income students who are having trouble paying off student loans.”

Legal Services NYC is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

The news conference begins at noon on Tuesday, September 22, at Legal Services NYC, 40 Worth Street, Suite 606, New York, NY.

Contact: Kate Whalen, Email: Kwhalen@ls-nyc.org, Tel: 646-442-3654

Legal Aid Society of Cleveland Receives \$214,566 Pro Bono Innovation Grant

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Legal Aid Society of Cleveland** will receive a 24-month \$214,566 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to create pro bono opportunities to engage late-career and retired attorneys to serve more low-income clients.

Twenty-nine percent of active attorneys in greater Cleveland are age 60 or older. The “Act 2” project seeks to provide these attorneys with a variety of options to continue practicing while helping support those in need. It will also match senior lawyers with law students and early-career lawyers to help provide mentorship and

an introduction to pro bono.

“Pro bono work is a lifeline for low-income individuals,” said U.S Senator Sherrod Brown. “This funding from the Legal Services Corporation will benefit attorneys, law students, and prospective clients by boosting pro bono services and supports. The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland will now be better equipped to take on new pro bono opportunities.”

Rep. Marcia L. Fudge (OH-11) said:“I applaud the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland for its commitment to providing quality legal counsel and services to individuals and families that need them the most. The first legal aid organization in Ohio to receive a grant from the Pro Bono Innovation Fund, the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is a shining example of the importance of fighting for equality and fairness in the judicial system.”

Attorneys participating in this project will be able to serve as in-house volunteers handling extended representation cases as part of a practice group or be responsible for a specific pro bono project. They will also have an opportunity to engage in traditional pro bono service through any of the organization’s existing efforts.

The project will provide space as well as administrative and paralegal support for the volunteers.

“We are grateful to Congress for funding this competitive grant program to increase pro bono support for civil legal aid,” said LSC President Jim Sandman. “The grants we are funding will expand the resources available to serve low-income people, engage more private lawyers in rewarding pro bono work, and leverage our federal appropriation.”

Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

Blue Ridge Legal Services, Inc. Receives LSC Pro Bono, Technology Grants

WASHINGTON – The Legal Services Corporation announced today that **Blue Ridge Legal Services** will receive a 24-month \$171,255 Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant to test the effectiveness of engaging the judiciary in encouraging the private bar to undertake pro bono to meet the civil legal needs of low-income clients.

The project is a pilot of the Virginia Access to Justice Commission, which will work with Blue Ridge Legal Services to achieve universal pro bono participation by attorneys in the 25th Judicial Circuit.

The project will create a pro bono planning committee comprised of the local judiciary, bar leaders, and legal aid representatives to develop and implement a plan for expanding pro bono participation among the circuit’s rural bar associations. It will also seek to engage the only law school in the circuit, Washington & Lee Law School, in a collaborative effort to identify the best ways to incorporate law students into the new pro bono efforts.

Blue Ridge Legal Services will also receive a \$127,200 Technology Initiative Grant from the Legal Services Corporation to conduct a study to measure the impact of self-represented litigants in state courts and analyze the unmet civil legal needs in the state. This project includes the collaboration of the National Center for State Courts, Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and the Virginia Access to Justice Commission.

“Congratulations to Blue Ridge Legal Services for being selected by the Legal Services Corporation to receive the Pro Bono Grant and the Technology Initiative Grant,” said U.S. Senator Mark Warner. “These grants will allow Blue Ridge Legal Services to continue their inspiring efforts to both identify areas of unmet civil legal need and to engage the private sector to expand pro bono legal assistance to low-income communities, particularly in rural areas. I want to thank Blue Ridge Legal Services, as well as the Legal Services Corporation for providing critical services to

empower Virginians across the Commonwealth.”

Blue Ridge Legal Services is one of 15 recipients of LSC’s \$4 million Pro Bono Innovation Fund, a competitive grant program that invests in projects that identify and promote replicable innovations in pro bono for low-income legal aid clients. This is the second year LSC has awarded the funds.

LSC’s \$4 million TIG program, which is in its 16th year, awarded 36 grants this year.

Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. The Corporation currently provides funding to 134 independent non-profit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

Topics

- **Pro Bono**

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