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June 7, 2007

Chairman Alan B. Mollohan  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-310 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan:

As we have done in the past several years, we are writing to ask for your help. As the general counsel of some of our nation's leading corporations, we are keenly aware of the critical role that the Legal Services Corporation plays in our judicial system, our economy and businesses, and our society in general. The Corporation is the primary legal lifeline to millions of Americans in times of need. Your support of the annual appropriations requests of the Corporation has been, and remains, pivotal to its mission of providing "*justice for all*" in this country. Please continue to make this commitment to equal access to the justice system by supporting the Corporation's FY 2008 budget request of \$430.6 million.

In FY 2007 the Corporation received its first budget increase since FY 2003. We are grateful for that increase and fervently hope that this year provides another opportunity to significantly narrow the stark *Justice Gap* that exists between those seeking and receiving help. The FY 2007 appropriation of \$348.5 million is the Corporation's largest since FY 1995, but falls far short of the \$400 million it received in that year. The rippling effect of budget cuts from 2003 through 2006 has had a profound effect on the number of low-income Americans served. Poverty statistics show that fifty million Americans are eligible for civil legal aid, including one in five children, some 13 million. LSC's regulations establish that individuals and families earning less than 125 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible to receive LSC-funded legal services. To put client need in perspective: a family of four must earn a meager \$25,813 or less to qualify.

Due to the significantly increased need for civil legal aid as a result of the hurricanes of 2005, LSC-funded programs have struggled to help the growing number of our country's impoverished residents. This need will continue to grow with the return of our low-wage veteran troops or in the wake of another natural disaster. *Documenting the Justice Gap*, a year-long study released by LSC in October 2005, revealed that a staggering 50 percent of eligible clients were turned away from LSC-funded programs due to a lack of resources. In other words, for every client served, at least one eligible client is turned away. These numbers, while vast, are a significant underestimate because they do not take into account those persons who would be eligible but who did not seek assistance because they knew resources were limited and feared they would be turned away or they were simply unaware that these legal services programs could help.

While we are mindful of the severe fiscal constraints under which the Congress finds itself, we know of no better investment in the stability of individual lives than the provision of high quality, essential legal help. It often makes the difference between sustenance and starvation, a home and homelessness, domestic tranquility and domestic violence. We simply cannot afford to deny the legal lifeline to millions who need it. Please support a FY 2008 LSC appropriation of \$430.6 million for the Legal Services Corporation.

Sincerely,

Kenneth C. Frazier  
Merck & Co., Inc.  
Chair, NLADA Corporate Advisory Committee

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