

# **BRINGING JUSTICE HOME**

## **TALKING POINTS ON LEGAL AID RESTRICTIONS**

When talking about funding for legal aid, it is difficult to know how to discuss the government restrictions and still project positive messages. This challenge was addressed in-depth in the opinion research conducted for the Project for the Future of Equal Justice.

To help spokespeople tackle this delicate issue most effectively, we have developed talking points. Following is specific language you can use to communicate more effectively on sensitive issues:

### **HOW TO TALK ABOUT RESTRICTIONS IN GENERAL**

Congress should not tie the hands of community legal aid offices that are trying to help people. The local offices—not Washington, D.C.—know best the needs of our community. Congress’s political decision to dictate who can and cannot get help is unfair and unwise. We should let the local legal aid offices working in the community decide how to help those who have no place else to turn.

### **CLASS ACTIONS**

Congress has taken away funds to local civil legal aid offices to help poor people who come together as a group to challenge government actions they believe are harmful to their community. These cases are generally not about money, but about protecting the health of the community. They usually seek to stop some action by government or a large industry, such as building an incinerator in a poor neighborhood. The people who are in these situations are those who need legal aid the most—because they are the most vulnerable.

### **WELFARE, ABORTION, IMMIGRANT CASES**

Congress in Washington, D.C. should not be telling local civil legal aid community offices who among the needy they can help and who they cannot, simply because of politics. The politicians in Washington may have an agenda, but civil legal aid offices are focused on helping people in their community who are most in need.

### **SAMPLE VERBIAGE**

[In this case, a poor person felt her rights were violated because of an unfair law on...abortion/welfare/immigration. Because she lacked money, she had no place else to turn except legal aid. If we believe that everyone should have access to justice in America, we need to allow this person an opportunity to challenge an alleged wrong, just as we allow a wealthy person to do so.]