

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 19, 2002

The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings  
The Honorable Judd Gregg  
Chair and Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Fritz and Judd:

We are writing to request an increase of \$45 million in funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) in the Fiscal Year 2003 Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Additional funds will ensure that the doors of justice are open to those in our society who are unable to afford legal representation.

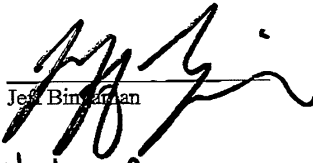
Although legal services are more in demand than ever, the Legal Services Corporation has suffered a major reduction in federal funding since 1995. In 1996, Congress imposed a 30% cut in funding that forced the closure of more than 100 legal aid offices across the nation, and every year, tens of thousands of eligible clients with critical legal problems are turned away due to lack of resources. Although funding for LSC has increased slightly since then, it is still 17.5% less than what it was in 1995, and far from adequate to guarantee the indigent the rights promised by the Constitution.

An increase in funding for LSC is particularly critical at this time. First, we expect the 2000 Census figures will require LSC to reallocate funding based on changes in state poverty rates. As such, many states that are already suffering due to past funding cuts will see their funding reduced as demand for services continues to rise. And even states that have seen an increase in poverty could experience a decrease in funding for legal services, given the reallocation. Moreover, some overburdened legal services programs have had case loads increase significantly since the terrorist attacks. LSC has helped more than a thousand attorneys address the legal needs of victims and their families, including helping them gain access to special government benefits and death certificates, and responding to attacks and threats based on hate, bias, and discrimination. In addition, members of our armed services and their families have received assistance in preparing wills, powers of attorney, and temporary custody orders.

Constraints on resources force local legal services providers to deny requests from people in need every day. Without an increase in federal funding, many more will be forced to forgo the legal representation they deserve. As the Senate prepares to consider nominations to the Board of the Legal Services Corporation, it is important that we reaffirm our strong commitment to this vital program.

We urge you to increase funding for the Legal Services Corporation by \$45 million to help meet this urgent need.

Sincerely,



Jeff Bingaman



Hillary Rodham Clinton



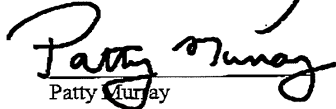
Richard J. Durbin



Russell D. Feingold



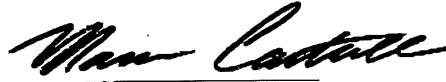
Edward M. Kennedy



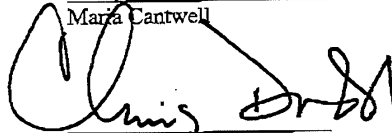
Patty Murray



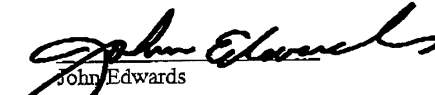
Paul Wellstone



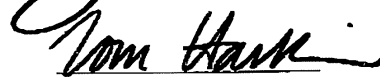
Marsha Cantwell



Christopher J. Dodd



John Edwards



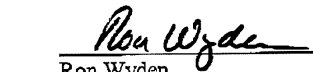
Tom Harkin



Barbara A. Mikulski



Jack Reed



Ron Wyden