


PUBLIC LAW CENTER
PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE
FOR ORANGE COUNTY'S LOW INCOME RESIDENTS

August 16, 2006

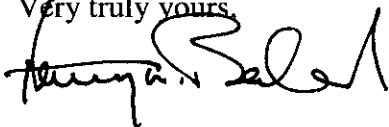
Opinion Page
The Orange County Register
625 N. Grand Avenue
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re: A legal boondoggle – August 16, 2006

Dear Sirs & Mesdames:

The Register's argument that the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) should be abolished ("A legal boondoggle" August 16, 2006) is based on a false premise. Apparently prompted by isolated reports of alleged misspending, the Register concludes that LSC funded legal aid programs are unnecessary because pro bono lawyers and lawyers on contingent fees can meet all the civil legal needs of the low income members of our community. The Register is wrong. As Orange County's pro bono program, the Public Law Center (which does not receive LSC funding) has 25 years of intimate familiarity with the outstanding good works of Orange County's volunteer lawyers. Pro bono lawyers are a critical component of how our society ensures "justice for all." But volunteer legal services are a supplement to, not a substitute for, legal aid programs funded by LSC. Even with the present continuum of service, which blends the work of legal aid staff with the efforts of pro bono lawyers, only 28% of our state's low income population is able to obtain the civil legal services they desperately need each year, according to the California Commission on Access to Justice. Contingent fee agreements occur in cases where significant monetary recovery is contemplated, but not in the kinds of cases legal aid programs handle. Abolish LSC and even fewer domestic violence victims, at risk children, and vulnerable seniors will have their day in court. Does anyone seriously think that's a good idea?

Very truly yours,



Kenneth W. Babcock
Executive Director & General Counsel
Public Law Center